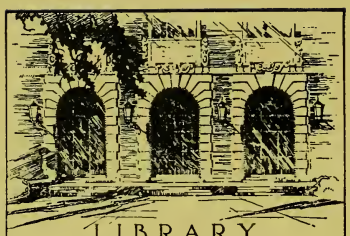

THE GARDEN AT MONKHOLME.

A Novel.

BY

ANNIE ARMITT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

PART II.—*continued.*

CHAPTER		PAGE
VII.	MONKHOLME UNDER A NEW ASPECT	1
VIII.	VIOLET IN SOCIETY	21
IX.	A TALK IN THE GARDEN	48
X.	TRUTH SPOKEN UNTRULY	64
XI.	TRUTH SPOKEN TRULY	91
XII.	THE ONE WHO WENT AND THE ONE WHO STAYED	125

PART III.

I.	REDFERN'S HOME	159
II.	DELAY	182
III.	WINTER AND DEATH	195
IV.	VIOLET'S FRIENDS	228
V.	ALMOST ALONE	259

THE GARDEN AT MONKHOLME.

PART II.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER VII.

MONKHOLME UNDER A NEW ASPECT.

The spring came again; in ecstasies of song the lark rose high to welcome it; the atmosphere glowed with strong bare sunshine before the green began to cover all the earth, and the air thrilled with the melodies of many birds, who sang with joy because the summer was only coming, not come. The brown sparrows chirped persistently in the green hedges under the black unsympathetic boughs of the ash-trees, which declined to

believe in the summer until all the woods were green, and they themselves had lost the sweetest days of all the year. The sparrows had not much to say, but they said it with great satisfaction, and made the lanes more cheerful with their happy chirping; they were content to speak in crowds, and only helped in a loud chorus, not seeking, like the lark, a silence in the upper air in which to utter long delicious notes, or rising high to give all their music back again to the sun which gave them joy to sing with. From solitary trees the yellow bunting sang its plaintive little air, and the thrushes poured out liberally their strong and mellow notes.

The birds were quite sure of the joys of their coming summer, and Violet had little doubt of hers; the music of her heart was silent, unlike theirs, but it spoke from her eyes, as she stood often in her lonely garden, looking down with a sweet and dreamy ex-

pectancy in her face into the hazy outline of the distant valley.

Redfern came again; at first his visit was all pleasure, though of a quieter sort than the last; Violet had grown a little afraid of her own unreasonable happiness, and Redfern had doubts of the wisdom of being so much pleased with Monkholme. Unconsciousness cannot last very long, and to begin to ask why we are satisfied is a way to drive satisfaction away.

However, the pleasure of Redfern and Violet in each other's society was very real, and was sufficient to make them content for a few days while there was no one else to come between them. After the few days, Alfred arrived; Mr. Hilborough had invited him as a companion for Redfern, with the mistaken kindness that often induces persons to give us precisely the things we don't want. Redfern and Alfred were very good friends,

but they had few tastes in common; and with a great deal of good will, each left the other to go his own way. Then Violet divided between them was not such a satisfactory Violet to Redfern as he found her alone; that quality which he would have called her universalism reappeared, and was displeasing to him; it was so opposed to his own nature, that it hardly seemed to him compatible with sincerity.

Also the neighbourhood about Monkholme was not so quiet as it had been in autumn. The people at Wood Bank were at home, and Hubert Lloyd was at the vicarage again; he was in the navy and had got leave of absence for a short time. Redfern was a little dismayed to discover that he was permitted to come to Monkholme as much as he liked; it seemed to him that Mr. Hilborough and Alfred took it too much for granted that whatever Violet allowed was right.

On Monday afternoon Hubert came to call, and his two sisters, Clara and Lucy, came in his train. He was a particularly handsome young man, with all the sensitive and animated beauty in his face that Alfred wanted; his manners had the careless ease of one accustomed to please everybody, and the graceful amiability of a spoilt brother, accustomed to be only admired and caressed in the household of women at home. The vicar was a dry little man who lived chiefly in his study, and Hubert Lloyd reigned with lazy affability over his mother and sisters.

It was evident that Clara and Lucy considered his interests the chief interests in the world, and thought his presence at the vicarage the only fact of importance at that time; yet it was curious to see how they accepted Violet's kindly tyranny over him as a matter of course, not objecting or wondering in the least when she ruled him with her friendly

indifference and clear-sightedness. Like many another self-elected monarch, Hubert recognised his own superior, and was quite docile and submissive to her, just because he saw she did not believe in him, though he had his own way with every one else.

"You know, Miss Hilborough, it's perfectly awful," he complained to Violet; "I come to stay in this dull hole, and not a creature offers to give me any entertainment in the way of parties or picnics."

"It is very shocking of everybody," said Violet, with playful mockery; "represent to them all how they are neglecting their duties, and their own interests too."

"You see," said Clara, breaking in with an anxious countenance, "we can't give parties at our house; of course, we can't dance there, and Hugh cares for nothing else."

"What else is there fit for a man to do at a party?" asked Hubert. He had seated

himself on a low stool, and, leaning back against the mantelpiece with his hands clasped behind his head, was gazing tranquilly at Violet, while the women discussed his amusements for him.

"The ladies won't *always* talk, of course," Violet observed, "when you are too lazy to help to entertain yourself."

"No, they won't," Hubert assented, "and when they do, it isn't always nice. They expect one to listen, and even to understand; and if a room is hot and one is bored, that is quite too much to do."

"I think they might give a little dance at Wood Bank," Clara said, pursuing the subject earnestly, "they have so much room there, and can do it so easily; and then they are always quite glad to get Hubert to their parties."

"If *you* would ask them, Miss Hilborough, they would give one to-morrow," said Hubert, with sudden animation.

"That would be a very good way of managing it," Violet retorted; "I will go to all the houses about, and explain that they ought to give parties at once, because Mr. Hubert Lloyd is at home, and does not wish to get bored."

"Don't laugh at me," he answered, "it's very serious, really."

"I'm sorry I can't help you, then."

"Mamma says we can get up a picnic, that is, for to-morrow," Clara continued; "I don't know what else we can do."

"If I got somebody to give a dance you would go, wouldn't you?" asked Hubert, gazing at Violet with his indolent gray eyes, in whose look there was something annoying to Redfern, although he did not recognise the selfishness and persistence which Violet saw through their beauty and sweetness.

Violet was capable of comprehending characters easily, of seeing their faults and

foibles without feeling them a cause for dislike or provocation; Redfern only was repelled, without knowing why.

"Yes, I would go, certainly," said Violet.

"Well, then, they *shall* do it. That will be a reason. I'll say that Miss Hilborough has promised to give me the first dance at the first party this week, and that I cannot miss it."

"I have not promised," remarked Violet.

"You will, won't you though?" he said, getting up and looking quite earnest.

"I don't know," she answered, laughing at his animation.

"To save me telling a story, you know; for I shall tell it, any way. You don't like people telling stories."

"Very well," said Violet, and he went away quite in high spirits, rather looking over Redfern as he said good afternoon, as if he did not quite see him, for he himself was six feet high.

"What a fine young fellow that is," observed Mr. Hilborough; "it's a pity his sisters have not his good looks."

"Yes, he is very handsome," said Alfred.

"I don't admire him," Redfern remarked; "he has eyes like a woman's."

"Is that saying so much against them?" Violet asked.

"Not if they belong to a woman; but for him they don't do. Why, Violet, they are more beautiful than yours."

"I know they are," she answered.

Redfern looked vexed that she should know it, and said no more on the subject.

In the evening they were talking about the chance of a dance, and the people who could be assembled for it.

"It is odd that we have so few really pretty girls about here; there are only two, I think, in all the houses in the valley," Violet remarked.

"Who are they?" asked Redfern, with sudden curiosity; for he had been paying no attention to the conversation before.

'Kate Lee and Jane Ashley."

"What constitutes a pretty girl, I wonder?"

"You must find out by looking."

"I quite thought you were considered one of the—what silly French word have they for it?—one of the attractions of this place," Redfern remarked.

"Oh, no," Violet answered; "I am not pretty at all. Can't you see for yourself?" she added, with a little laugh; "most people like me, and are kind to me, but that is different."

"Is it?" said Redfern, meditatively; "then if you have no beauty, Violet, all women would do well to pray for ugliness."

"Oh, Redfern!" answered Violet, flushing with pleasure, "what a compliment! and you

profess to despise young men who pay compliments."

"I mean what I say, and that makes a difference," he answered.

"Perhaps they think they do, too."

"Oh, of course; we are all just like one another," replied Redfern, crustily, retiring from the conversation again.

In the morning, at ten o'clock, Hubert Lloyd appeared at Monkholme alone. Redfern said good morning to him with anything but pleasure, as he disturbed their pleasant little party in the breakfast-room, and at once took the first place in the conversation, ignoring Redfern, neglecting Alfred, and evidently considering Violet alone worthy of his attention.

"I could not stand it any longer at home," he said, "they won't let a fellow alone for five minutes."

"In fact," replied Violet, "they were

spoiling you dreadfully at the vicarage, I suppose, so you came up here to be scolded."

"Yes, if you'll have me. You are always so good," he replied, sitting down comfortably, as if the whole place belonged to him, and taking Violet's wool at once into his charge, making it straight where it had got tangled, while she knitted.

"I dare say you deserve to be scolded," said Violet.

"No, I don't, really. I've been awfully good lately; you've no idea."

"I don't think I have," replied Violet gravely, "as, for instance——"

"I have not smoked above three cigars since I came home. Upon my honour, now, I have not."

"That *is* an excess of virtue."

"Well, I think it is," remarked the young man. "I deserve some encouragement for it."

"How can you be encouraged?"

"By a little kindness," he replied, with pathos. "You are so hard upon a fellow."

"What can I do?"

"Show me some sympathy."

"Well, I will; I sympathize with you deeply. What in? In your taste for cigars?"

"Would not dancing do instead?"

"If you like."

"Then I will tell you what I came on purpose to tell you, only you looked so discouraging. I went to Wood Bank last night, and flattered the old lady to no end, and the consequence is we are to have a carpet-dance to-morrow."

"That is very nice," said Violet brightly. "I am very glad."

"She is like a child," thought Redfern, in a little disgust, "pleased with anything and anybody."

"That is really kind of you," answered Hubert, in delight. "Let me wind that wool; and would not you like a stool for your feet?"

"In fact, I am good, and must be rewarded," said Violet, laughing, as he got the footstool and arranged it for her; "but I was quite as comfortable before."

"Don't say so, it's downright cruel, and I am trying dreadfully to please you."

"Do you want some favour, then?"

"Yes; I want the last dance as well as the first."

"Wait till we get there, and ask then."

"No, that won't do. Come now, I'll be ever so good if you will."

"In what way?"

"In every way. I'll go to church with the greatest regularity, and attend to the sermons. I'll beat the curate himself for sanctity and croquet."

"But, you see," observed Violet, "it won't do me any good if you do."

"I know that," replied Hubert, with deep despondency; "but you need not force the fact on a fellow like that."

"You need not get ill about it," said Violet, laughing. "You may recover; I will give you the two dances."

A sort of picnic had been improvised for that afternoon by the Lloyds. Redfern hoped for some enjoyment from it, for they were going to a pretty place, and hitherto Violet had always given more of her society to him than to anyone else. He found to his disgust that she almost ignored the presence of Alfred and himself, devoting herself wholly to the strangers of the party, and letting Hubert Lloyd wait upon her and monopolise her as much as he liked. He had no idea that her instinctive good breeding taught her that it was not the right thing

to entertain her own household in a party of strangers; but he observed that Alfred took it as a matter of course, and made himself useful with his quiet, lazy good-nature, to all the ladies, young and old. They ordered him about a good deal, and did not seem to consider him a person of great consequence. Hubert Lloyd was the hero of them all, and he amiably allowed them all to worship him, except Violet, who was understood to worship nobody.

Redfern, when he found that Violet was entirely engaged with the leaders of the party, while he himself was left in the background as a person of no consequence, made up his mind to circumstances. Clara Lloyd was busy arranging everything and looking after all the details of the pic-nic, but Lucy was at liberty, and Redfern found himself walking through the woods with her. He was not accustomed to entertain young ladies,

but he acquitted himself very well, talking in a droll way about everything—as he could do when he liked—and mystifying and interesting his companion.

"Your cousin is very odd, isn't he?" Lucy said to Violet the next day, when she called at the parsonage, "but very clever, I should think."

Lucy was a young lady of a very inquiring mind, with an insatiable appetite for information on every subject; she had a liking for what she called "deep things," and a great faith in the remarkable powers of anyone who was not exactly like the rest of the world. She believed in Violet entirely, and always felt that she was not clever enough to be ever made her confidential friend.

"I have heard people say he is," said Violet.

"But you must know yourself, from your own conversation; you see so much

of him," persisted Lucy, with great interest.

"I don't know; I never talk to him about clever things, so I can't tell."

"I should like to know him better," said Lucy with solemnity.

Afterwards Violet asked Redfern how he got on with Miss Lloyd.

"She is very nice, I dare say," he answered, "but she is just like 'Mangnall's Questions,' she mingled all subjects up together."

"And who provided the answers?"

"I had to do. I am sure I told her some queer things. Do many young ladies exist like that in society? and are all young men capable of turning into walking dictionaries at command?"

"She seemed to think you managed very well."

"Then I am glad I am going away soon. Such a success is worse than a failure; it

necessitates another success afterwards, and so on for ever. If I stayed a week more she would infallibly find me out."

"I don't think she would," said Violet.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIOLET IN SOCIETY.

REDFERN was at first unwilling to go to the party at Wood Bank; he said he knew nobody, he could not dance, and he was not a good talker; but his scruples were at last over-ruled by Mr. Hilborough and Violet. Alfred merely said: "Nonsense, old fellow, of course you'll go," but his uncle remarked that it was proper and right for him to go with them; he had been especially included in the invitation they received, and Violet begged and teased him to accompany them, so that at last he was persuaded she wanted him to be there for her own sake, and agreed

to go, forgetting the lesson of the picnic.

He had never seen Violet in full dress before, and when she came downstairs in a cloud of white, with blue ribbons and flowers —which suggested a deeper blue than usual in her eyes—he looked at her curiously.

"I don't think you look as nice as you do every day," he said abruptly.

"Oh! that's unkind," she answered; "you might have told me so when I came back, but not now; it will put me in low spirits to know I don't look well."

"My dear, he thinks, with me, that you always look well," Mr. Hilborough said, smiling.

"You need not care for his remarks," said Alfred; "you know he has dreadful taste. Be consoled by me; I shan't think anybody in the room looks as nice as you."

"What I said did not imply that any

one would look as nice," Redfern growled, in an undertone.

Violet flung him back a look and a laugh as she got into the carriage.

"You flatter me more than anyone," she said.

Redfern got in last, and screwed himself into a corner, feeling slightly out of his element. He was afraid of the gauzy atmosphere which filled the carriage, and did not know how to keep out of the way. Alfred had helped Violet in, and now had taken charge of her gloves and fan and shawls; he seemed to know what to do with them, and how to pull her cloak round her neck without crushing any of those mysterious frills which Redfern would not have dared to touch. Alfred went out to dances, as he did everything else, in a calm, business-like way, as if he knew exactly what came next and what to do in all circumstances. It had always, even

in his childhood, been easy for him to behave properly. With Redfern it was quite different. Mr. Hilborough was much more at home with young ladies than he was; he comprehended better the kind of attentions Violet would want, and considered about wetting her boots and spoiling her gloves, while Redfern did not at all know how to treat her when she was dressed up like a flower, that a touch might crush.

Besides, she had been, in her position as hostess, rather accustomed to think about him, and now she suddenly seemed to expect him to think about her, and be ready to get all she required at a moment's notice, turning to him when she wished to get rid again of her fan and gloves that Alfred might help her out, with calm sweet eyes of expectancy, which rather bewildered him, because he did not know what they expected. Mr. Hilborough came to the rescue and took the things from her, and

Violet went up the steps to the house in Alfred's charge, and entirely absorbed in the care of her white skirts.

Redfern followed with an odd feeling that he did not know her yet; she had seen all there was of him, while there was only one corner of her character with which he had hitherto made acquaintance.

When they got into the dancing-room, he wondered more than ever, and yet he could not but admire. Amid the crowd of women there, many better dressed or prettier than herself, she took her own place quite naturally; she never seemed the one too many in any party, her place there always seemed to have been made just to suit her, she filled it so well. Under the simplicity and unreserve of her daily manners, he would never have guessed that so much self-possession existed; she seemed equally at home everywhere, and though in her own house

she demanded no ceremony, and waited on everyone as if she was the last to be considered, here she appeared as naturally to take all the attention and consideration that were given to her, as if the attitude of calmly ignoring everything but her own wishes, and letting herself be waited upon, was habitual to her.

Either she thought so little or so much of herself—Redfern could not tell precisely which—perhaps it was something of both, that, so long as her own identity was unaltered, no change of position seemed to disturb her.

Hubert Lloyd came at once to claim her, and stood over her in a monopolising way. She listened to his very polite speeches with unconsciousness or indifference, and did not laugh at them as she did at home, but gazed before her calmly, as if they were pretty things belonging, like the flowers, rather to the place than to her.

Wood Bank was a great new house standing on the hill-side, built some years before by wealthy people, whose riches had not belonged to them very long. Mrs. Wood, the hostess there, was stout, fussy, and slightly vulgar. Mr. Wood was rather nervous and retiring: he had enjoyed making money more than spending it; he had understood the first business thoroughly; in his performance of the second, his wife and daughters were continually reproving him, and suggesting that he was making a mistake and not doing the proper thing. He rubbed his hands a great deal in the course of the evening, and hoped that every one had all they wanted. His footman was much more at home in his splendid rooms than he was himself.

The Misses Wood were conscious that their papa and mamma were not all that they might be; but they made up for such

deficiencies in their own persons. They were young ladies of an elegance that was perhaps a little excessive; they had very low voices, pronounced every s fully, and left out the harder consonants as much as possible, as if all their words had been well broken up with a pestle and mortar, before they were permitted to enter their mouths. They avoided the mistake of many newly-made heiresses, and behaved with affability and without self-assertion to everyone. They were small and slight, with a great deal of hair and eyes; they were not pretty, but their dresses were beautiful without being ostentatious.

They welcomed Violet most particularly, and called her "dear." Mrs. Wood addressed her more loudly, and ordered the footman to bring a banner-screen for her use, and sent at once for her son, who was at the other end of the room.

Hubert Lloyd appeared to think that nobody was worth his attention except Violet; his manners were very gentlemanly, and he could not be suspected of patronizing, yet it seemed to Redfern that he acted much as if all the place belonged to him, and the Woods only kindly held it for his use; he certainly had his own way with the musician and the dances more than the sons of the house. He seemed unconscious of the fact that anybody but himself and the lady he was dancing with were to be considered, and he had the servants in to alter the arrangements of the seats, to suit his partner's convenience, without hesitation. The Misses Wood admired him all the more for his easy airs of command, and thought his manners perfect; their own brothers could not act so; they were a little afraid of the musician, and the servants, and the young ladies.

There was one thing Redfern admired

in the manners of Violet and Hubert Lloyd, and most of the people there. They not only avoided noticing the deficiencies or peculiarities of the persons about them, but seemed absolutely unconscious of them ; from Hubert's politely attentive face as he listened to Mrs. Wood's conversation, he could never have guessed how the h she had missed in some words was hastening to appear again in others without regard to correctness ; and Violet, as she looked tranquilly at Mr. Wood, did not seem at all aware that he was rubbing his hands and bending nervously backwards and forwards while he spoke to her. The manners were not quite so good in Mrs. Hilborough's set at home now ; the people there were not all superior enough to disclaim superiority ; he had actually seen the young ladies adopting a rather finer manner than usual in addressing vulgar persons.

Violet was led away to dance; she left her fan in Redfern's charge with a smile, as if it were a favour; Hubert Lloyd ignored him rather still, he looked round him, rather than at him, as if he had been an article of furniture. "Oh, he was a cousin, was he? He would do to take care of fans." There was something of that sort in his manner to him. Redfern could not quite define what it was; he would have laughed at it generally; it only made him feel a little drier and less agreeable now.

His hostesses came to him in soft flutters of tulle and low laughter, and offered to find him a partner, while attendant partners of their own begged them to come away and dance.

"He could not dance? they were very sorry; would he like to go and smoke? there was a room upstairs, they thought—Oh, the music had begun, had it?" and so they went away.

He was left alone to watch the maze of flowing dresses, and the mysterious entanglement of white-gloved hands; to listen to the murmur of talk and laughter, and the strains of the music, to which all the confusion in the room moved in rhythmical harmony; to hear odd half-sentences spoken to other persons, of which he could guess neither the beginning nor the end; to catch sudden glances cast half across the room with varying meanings, not intended for him; to turn to see who they were given to, and find that all positions were changed or changing, so that he could not tell. There were looks of invitation, or dissent, or amusement, or sympathy; all seemed conscious only of themselves and their own interests in the crowd, and to imagine that no one could watch, any more than they watched themselves. Yet there was a strange propriety and method about it all; the whole roomful, with its con-

flicting motives and intentions, gave itself up to the government of the piano, the one voice that spoke for them all; till the music crashed and fell, the mysterious groups broke up and flowed outwards in all directions, like a lake that has overflowed its margin; there were bows, and "thank you's," and fluttering of fans and white dresses subsiding into chairs, and general movements of black coats about the room.

Redfern wondered if they liked it, and how they knew what they ought to do next. Young men came past him with abstracted countenances, carrying glasses of lemonade; young ladies swept out of the room in the charge of gentlemen who seemed absorbed in fanning them, or taking watchful care of their dresses. Nearly every one seemed to have a most engrossing occupation; the ladies were all occupied apparently with them-

selves, and the gentlemen were occupied with them.

"It is an odd farce for society to play!" thought Redfern; "who would think that the white half of the room darned the stockings of the black half in ordinary life!"

Perhaps he was mistaken about the stockings, but there was some truth under his mistake.

Violet came past; both she and her partner seemed engrossed in considering a long tear in her flounce, which it was necessary to have mended at once; she was going out to get it done, and the gentleman with her was much alarmed lest it should not be finished before the next dance began.

"What do you call this sort of stuff?" Redfern heard him say admiringly as they passed; "it seems to me a kind of mist. You don't mean to say it will bear stitching?"

The dancing went on again, and Redfern continued to watch. Mr. Hilborough had disappeared into another room, and Redfern had been invited to follow him and play whist, but had declined; the dancing-room had a fascination for him, though watching gave him no pleasure.

He saw Clara Lloyd dancing with great neatness and accuracy, as if it would have disgraced her to miss a step, and Lucy absorbed in conversation with a tall partner, an odd young man, who wore spectacles when he was not dancing, and had impressed her strongly with the idea of science.

There was Hubert in the distance, always devoted to his partner, whoever she might be, and ignoring everybody else; and Alfred, calm and gentlemanly as usual, dancing as if it were a duty, and paying all necessary and proper attentions, but no more. He was too amiable, and not sufficiently in-

terested to be a great favourite with young ladies.

At last Violet came, though she seemed to have forgotten him for so long; she walked up the room with a flushed face and radiant eyes, a glow of enjoyment and excitement all about her. She had her hand on the arm of a young Wood; he was rather awkward and gawky-looking, and had red hair; he walked clumsily, and fanned her rather nervously, but very assiduously. She seemed as unconscious of him and his awkwardness as she had been of Hubert and his beauty and grace. She looked straight before her, with a happy smile on her lips, and the music of the dance seemed yet to animate her feet.

"It is delightful, is it not?" she said, as she sank down in the seat by Redfern, with a sigh of pleasure and fatigue.

"It may feel so," he observed curtly, "it does not look so."

She turned to him with an awakening face; she had been conscious only of her own sensations before.

"Don't you like it? Perhaps you have been getting tired and dull."

"It is amusing, doubtless, to be looked at. It is not so amusing to look."

"And you know no one. I might have come to speak to you before," she said.

"Thank you, if it is pleasanter to forget me I would rather be forgotten."

She saw from his abrupt manner that he was vexed in some way; she said no more about him therefore, but talked to her partner till another dance began, and he was disposed of; then she refused to dance, and turned to Redfern.

He understood her wish to please him, and was half-gratified and half-annoyed; but her conversation soon made him forget his vexation, and he was amused by her information

and remarks about the people there. He forgot that she could dance if he could not, and seemed to suppose it natural that she should spend the evening in a corner talking to him.

Alfred came up, however, calm and bland, to claim a promised dance.

"Let me off," said Violet, "I don't want to dance."

Alfred looked disappointed, and somewhat silently and amiably obstinate; he was careful not to ask too much from any one, and slow to perceive that they did not mean to give what he asked.

"It is the first to-night, Letty," he observed.

"Go and dance," said Redfern.

"Oh, I'm tired, and I'm hot!" said Violet, leaning back lazily.

"You are a most untruthful young woman," Redfern observed gravely.

"I am tired, really," she declared; "I dare say I should forget it if I danced, but I feel so now."

"Go, then," said Redfern; "I would much rather you did."

So, upon persuasion, she went, but she soon returned, and for some time would not dance again. She was afraid that Redfern had felt slighted and neglected in the first part of the evening, and she was anxious, since he could not ask for any attention, to give as much or more to him than to the other young men. There was always in her mind that vague desire to make up for his wants by her kindness, and hide all his losses behind her friendship.

Hubert Lloyd reappeared to beg for another dance; she refused him at first, and then over and over again; but he persisted, giving urgent reasons why she should, explaining away all her excuses, and looking at

her so earnestly with entreating gray eyes, that she blushed a little, and smiled a little, though she tried not to do; then he begged harder than ever, upon which she laughed at him, and began to beat time with her foot upon the floor.

"You know you mean to come all the time," he said, "only you say you won't to tease me."

With a little laugh she tossed her fan down and put out her hand, and in another moment they were whirling round in the mazes of the dance.

She did not come back again soon; after being persuaded to join the dancers it was hard to escape once more; she enjoyed herself; Redfern saw her appear and disappear, always smiling, flushed, and animated.

He tried not to be unreasonable, but he could not help feeling a little tired and disgusted. He could not understand how

Violet could like both him and that young Lloyd at the same time; they seemed to have opposite natures, and hers could not surely be sympathetic with both. *He* could not beg favours with such earnestness and elegance combined; he could not look so anxious about a trifle, or be so graceful in offering his attentions that it was hard to refuse them.

"She does not like me," he thought, "more than any one else; she is kind to me, as she is to all the world; she has been brought up to think it right. I had forgotten that while she is the only girl who has much part in my life, I am merely one of a dozen young men who are equally interesting to her. I thought I could wait. Things don't change for me; for her they are always changing. I am a fool; I should never have come to Monkholme."

Then his thoughts went back to his dull,

uncomfortable home, and he felt anxious to get back there again, and be absorbed once more in his dry accounts and correspondence.

The time passed on; he gave up watching, and was left undisturbed, till at last a young lady was brought by her partner to the seat beside him.

She was a girl of rather excited manners, and she talked a great deal, though she was much out of breath. Redfern paid no attention to her conversation till he heard Violet's name mentioned.

"That is Miss Hilborough in the white dress, is it not?" the gentleman asked.

"Yes," said the lady, "dancing with Mr. Lloyd, the vicar's son."

"I have heard a great deal of her," said the young man, "but I never saw her before to-night."

"Have you really?" said the lady, with a

little air of surprise. "Then you would be disappointed, of course. She is not really pretty, but she flirts so much that all the men admire her."

Redfern glanced at the young lady furtively, as at some one whom he wished very much to dislike. A gray-haired gentleman, who stood close to, turned and looked too, but he also spoke.

"I think," he said gravely, "if all young ladies flirted in the way Miss Hilborough does, it would be better for the young men."

The young lady merely shrugged her shoulders, and when he had walked away, said in a lower voice to her partner; "Look at her now, don't you call that flirting?"

Redfern looked up the room; it was the last dance, and so Violet, according to promise, had been dancing it with Hubert. She was tired and wanted to give up, and

it was easy to see that he was begging her not to do; she had her hand on his arm, but stood with her face turned away, smiling a little, while he talked earnestly, and sometimes glancing at him and shaking her head.

It was only that he begged persistently, and she listened smilingly; but his bent head and soft earnest eyes, her half-averted face, and lips that smiled instead of answering, made up a picture displeasing to Redfern. He did not see how the contest ended; he got up impatiently, and went to another part of the room.

When he saw Violet again the dance was over, and she was walking slowly up the room with her hand on Hubert's arm. Redfern acknowledged to himself that there was no other young man in the room with such a fine appearance as the vicar's son. He walked as if it all, and most things besides,

belonged to him naturally, and he looked as if he thought of none of them except the lady in his charge; while she took his attentions as a matter of course, and seemed to have forgotten him. He was looking at her with a face of grave interest, and fanning her carefully and quietly; she gazed straight before her, with a musing smile upon her lips, and a sweet and distant look in her gray eyes. Redfern wondered how she could have such a look, at such a time and in such a place. There she was, still the same Violet whom he knew, with the expression that belonged rather to what he fancied her than what she proved herself to be; she always seemed to have the same nature, although her actions did not match it; he could not fathom the distinction he thought he saw between what she was and what she did.

She caught sight of him as he watched

her steadily, and her face brightened and softened into the quiet, tender smile she always gave him. He did not comprehend it, or her, or himself, so he got up and escaped into the hall, where ladies were coming down like bundles of shawls, and saying good-night from under curious hoods that had swallowed up hair and flowers.

Everybody seemed to know everybody else, except himself, who knew nobody. It was his own fault, however, and he observed to himself that he did not wish to know them.

His own party came out soon; Mr. Hilborough and Alfred were again assiduous in taking care of Violet; they thought it important that she should not take cold, and that she should not feel very tired. As she had danced for her own pleasure, and not in self-sacrifice, Redfern thought so much anxiety and sympathy unnecessary. He was

very silent as they drove home, but that was not unusual, and Violet was silent too; she had finished her exertions for the evening, and said little more than good-night before she went to bed.

CHAPTER IX.

A TALK IN THE GARDEN.

REDFERN'S silent mood did not disappear with the morning, though Violet came down looking as fresh and pleasant as usual. No sense of past frivolity and dissipation oppressed her, as she talked over the incidents of the evening with Alfred. Once more Hubert Lloyd came to call, and with him appeared the red-haired young Wood, who was deeply, though bashfully, enchanted by Violet's pleasantness. He could do little to show his admiration except gaze at her; so he gazed, while Hubert talked. The young men had some excuse for calling;

they had found a handkerchief, or glove, or fan in the hall after Violet had gone, and had supposed it might be hers, so had brought it at once, naturally believing that she could not live a day without it.

Redfern was more disgusted than ever. He hardly knew Monkholme now, it was changed so much; it had become the perpetual resort of inane young men, who flattered Violet, and thought no man worth speaking to while a young woman was by. Evidently, Violet's acquaintances were chiefly such persons, and she had put up with an odd creature like himself in the temporary absence of them all.

He left them making their call, and went out for a long walk alone, a solitary ramble on the hills, which did him much more harm than good. Self-communion was seldom profitable to him—his own humility was apt to engender bitterness in his mind; perhaps

it was not true humility, but only self-depreciation; he was unable to judge himself generously, and ended by acting unjustly to others.

He returned at noon, in time for lunch. Violet was coming in from her garden, where she had been out alone; she met him on the gravel walk, and smiled a welcome, as if willing to linger and talk a little as they went in. He was in no mood for that, being too conscious of moroseness in his own mind to enjoy her amiability, and she soon felt the chill that he tried to keep out of his answers, so she left him to himself.

It was the same at lunch. Redfern conversed with Mr. Hilborough, but with no one else. He felt in a constrained, dull mood that separated him from the youth and frankness of the other two. Alfred was as cheerful as ever; the trifles that disturbed Redfern were evidently regarded by him as

things of course, ordinary incidents in the life of a young lady. Violet saw that Redfern was unwilling to talk to her; she grew a little more silent herself in consequence, but she was capable of waiting till he recovered from his moroseness, and so did not tease him with conversation.

She went into the garden in the afternoon, and looked rather absently at her plants and flowers. An old pear tree at the corner of the garden—a wanderer from the orchard regions—had scattered white blossoms over the lawn; she stood in the midst of it on the grass in the sunshine, by the green sleepy pond with its mouldy stone parapet, and the two swans stretched out long necks to her while she looked over their heads, past the belt of trees below, where the brook ran, to the distant lines of hedgerows and lanes in the valley beyond. Redfern came up from the brook, which was rather a favourite

haunt of his, for he liked its wild, low music. He was passing her silently, and she turned to him with a little hesitation.

"Are you going in?" she said. "It is so pleasant here."

"And you have no one else," he observed rather grimly; "still, I am afraid you will find me stupid. I can't rival the young men about here in being agreeable."

She looked away from him, and began to peel the moss and the ivy from an old stone.

"I think I don't deserve that," she said, in a low voice.

"No, you deserve nothing but good," he answered impatiently; "you always take care to behave beautifully. That is the worst of it."

Again she waited a minute, and then turned and looked him full in the face with earnest, demanding eyes.

"Have I vexed you, Redfern? Why don't you tell me, if I have?"

"What does it matter if you have vexed me? It can't make any difference either way."

A little reproach came into her eyes then, and she turned them from him.

"It is you who choose to say so," she answered quietly, "and once you told me that my indifference was better than my friendship."

That sentence proved that if Violet could easily forgive, she did not readily forget, and it did harm at that moment, for it reminded Redfern of his old ungraciousness, and made him more ungracious now.

"So it is—for me," he replied.

"You think, then, that I am only fit for the friendship of—of—of the young men I saw last night."

"I never said so."

"But you mean it, and that is worse. Why don't you speak, if you are hurt?" she continued hurriedly, "I would rather you did. Nobody treats me like you; I am not accustomed to be blamed secretly, and never told why."

"No, of course not," he said, more frigidly; "I don't belong to your life at all."

She beat the turf impatiently with her foot, and looked away to the trees and hills. She felt that Redfern was cruel to her; for him she never had any airs of pride or reserve—she offered him frankly all the kindness she had to give, and he chose to say that he was nothing to her, knowing that it was impossible for her to contradict him, however she might wish to do it.

"What is the matter?" she asked suddenly. "Have I done something that you think wrong?"

"I have not any right to judge you."

"No right?" she asked slowly, her eyes saddening as she gazed into the distance still. "I don't know. Have you none?"

"How can I have?" he answered crossly, the reserved consciousness of that possible right which seemed impossible making him more impatient.

She had nothing more to say; she turned away despondingly, and walked towards the house, and he walked with her. He was more unhappy than she was, because it was hard for him not to speak all the wishes that he felt would alienate her from him for ever when uttered. How could she, with her careless life, her bright companions, her sunny hopes, link her fate to his, which had always been cast in shadow? So he was silent and more ungracious, because he was angry that he should love her so much and so hopelessly.

As they drew nearer to the house, Violet tried to say something commonplace, for to be at open enmity with any one was hateful to her nature.

"Did you find it dull last night?" she asked.

"Hardly dull enough for some people," he said drily.

"You thought it all frivolous and foolish, I suppose? Did you not approve of it?"

"Don't ask me," he answered.

She was silent, but she looked at him inquiringly.

"If you must know," he said impatiently, "it is not likely that I should approve of an amusement that allows one young lady to say of another—one who is something to me, if not a great deal—that 'the men admired her because she flirted so much.' There, it is not a gentlemanly speech,

because, I suppose, one woman uttered it of another."

Violet turned to him with rather a flushed face, and steady self-possessed eyes.

"Did any one say that of me? Those things mean less in society than you seem to imagine."

"All the worse for the society."

"And it did not much matter," she continued steadily, "so long as it was not true."

"Of course," he said, avoiding her eyes, "so long as it was not true."

Violet stood still in the walk, and drew a long breath before she spoke. Such an accusation from him meant more than from any one else, and hurt her very much more.

"Did you think it true, then, from your own observation?"

"From my own observation I by no means thought it untrue."

"Redfern," she began, and then she stopped and tried to master her indignation; he looked ill at ease and disturbed, but said no more. "Do you mean, then," she said, speaking quite quietly, "that I did not behave with propriety?"

"Propriety! I was not speaking of propriety, but something higher. Oh, your behaviour is always correct."

"You thought that I 'flirted' so much?"

"I would rather not say."

"You have said it," she said, with quick indignation; "you have chosen to make me angry past forgiveness. I know how much you mean by your few words. You misinterpret me, and blame me, as no one else does. Do you think I can frankly be your friend any more? You have shut the

door on that for us both. With you, at least, I will not flirt. Oh, Redfern!"

She stopped abruptly and turned away; the approbation of all the world availed her nothing so long as he judged her unkindly.

"I am afraid I have been very rude," he began humbly, "I beg your pardon——"

She turned to him again with flashing eyes, and such a proud, straight look as he had never seen her wear before.

"I will give no pardon," she said, with repressed indignation that put him away in the distance of her righteous indignation, "unless you can unsay what you have chosen to tell me. Do you think I have no self-respect at all, because I have always been too amiable to you? I know I have been foolish. We cannot be friends any more. And I meant to be kind," she went on

drearily, looking away, "I wanted to please you; I thought perhaps——"

Her voice died away; she clasped her hands together and bent her head trembling, as if she tried to be calm again and could not.

He guessed the tears in her eyes rather than saw them, and he could endure it no longer.

"Don't mind me, Violet," he said, losing his diffidence in his intense sympathy and self-reproach, and taking her trembling hand very tightly in his.

She looked at him and snatched it away; the tears in her eyes dried as suddenly as they had come.

"Are we going to begin a flirtation?" she asked, with distant coldness.

He moved a little back, and his face flushed, but her own kept its pale colour.

"You are very much mistaken if you

think so," she continued, quite as if he had put himself out of her existence and could wound her no more.

"I by no means think so," said Redfern.

"It does not matter, I suppose, that we can't be friends," she observed, "we don't see each other very often. I am sorry I made the mistake of talking to you as a friend at all. You neither know, nor care to know, what I am, or what I wish for and think of. Such a judgment of me separates us more than a great deal of unkindness; I could have forgiven that."

"I know you could," he said.

"But this I cannot overlook. It will always be between us. We talk a different language, and I shall never speak to you again, hoping to be understood. That is all."

"At last I have made you angry."

"Angry? Is this being angry? It is being wretched. If I were angry I could forgive you, perhaps; but this is worse than anger—it is knowledge; I know you see me falsely, and I cannot unknow it. If you asked me to forgive you, I might, but I cannot believe an untruth any more. Don't you see that? It is not my will, but the truth, that is so hard."

"You are quite right," he answered, "it is the truth that is so hard;" but he did not mean what she meant.

"Yes, I know," she said, and she looked at him very sadly for a minute, with all the dignity gone out of her face and attitude, then went away into the house.

In her own room Violet sat alone for the rest of that sunny afternoon; she had never had such a hard loss to go through before. She wanted more than all to forgive him, and let him judge her as he liked, and it could

not be; so all her life looked to her like a blank, or worse than that, an aching void, an unanswered longing, a consciousness of loneliness she could not help, a passion of love she might not give.

For Redfern it was worse still, for there was the bitterness of self-reproach in his unhappiness; he had hurt her, and she was kind to him; he had wounded her, and—no, she did not love him—that remorse he could not claim, at least.

CHAPTER X.

TRUTH SPOKEN UNTRULY.

"WHAT is the matter with you, Violet?" Mr. Hilborough asked that evening, as she sat listlessly at his feet with her hands idle on her knee. "Why are you so quiet?"

Violet flushed suddenly crimson. She knew that Redfern looked at her from his distant corner, and she rose quickly.

"Nothing is the matter," she said. "I am dull, I suppose, with being too gay yesterday; I will play for you, since I am too stupid to talk."

She went to her piano, and played all the evening, to save her from the necessity of

speaking. Redfern listened to her music, and read little of his book. As was usual after all his outbreaks of righteous bad temper, he ended by perceiving or imagining that she had been always right, and he simply stupid and unjust.

When they said "good-night" that evening, Violet missed giving her hand to Redfern, as had been her custom before. It was difficult to tell whose fault it was: Redfern supposed she would be anxious to escape shaking hands with him; she thought he showed no readiness to be treated as usual.

All the next day they avoided one another as much as possible. Alfred, and even Mr. Hilborough, saw that there was something wrong between them, but they thought such a coolness must soon end.

"He has an odd temper, I believe," Mr. Hilborough said to himself, "though he keeps it well under, and doesn't let it be

seen—at least to me: but he will find it very hard to quarrel with Violet."

Hard as it might be, he had successfully managed it. Violet did her duty as hostess to him, but no more. She gave him no kind looks or pleasant talk. He found that she anxiously looked after his comforts, but she never spoke to him unless obliged, and hardly glanced at him, though only with a cold, unwilling look, when he addressed her.

After the first day he found her coldness and distance growing more than he could endure, at least in her constant society. He tried to gain a little forgiveness by paying her constant though unobtrusive attentions. At first he had spared her his presence and notice as much as possible; now she found she could not escape from the solicitous though silent kindness that everywhere pursued her. She rebelled against it, and rejected it as much as she could; but Redfern was not to be repelled.

The second morning, which was Friday, she went out as usual into her garden. Alfred was not with her; Redfern gave way to him when he was present, but in his absence his attentions were persistent. Violet was looking after her ferns; she was not much interested in them just then, but she was obliged to be doing something, so she gave them the advantage of her industry. She knew that Redfern was about the garden, but she declined to see him. She found, however, that some one was perpetually refilling her watering-can, and removing her little tools for her when she went from one place to another.

She was vexed, and worked impatiently, and at last she could endure it no longer. She knew that he was standing behind her waiting for her can to be empty again, and she turned round suddenly.

"Why will you go on like this?" she

asked impatiently; "don't you see I would rather not?"

"I think you might let me help you a little," he answered, "it does you no harm."

"I don't wish to be grateful to you," she said; "I cannot take help from people I don't like. Can't you understand that?"

"You don't like me, then?" he said persistently.

She turned from him abruptly, and began to dig up the soil rather fiercely with her little fork.

"We neither of us like each other, I suppose. Will you please to go away?"

He went away, but he came again after a little time, and stood before her for one minute.

"Are you always going to treat me like this?" he asked.

"Do you want me to *pretend* things?" she replied; "I can't. I'm not used to it."

"No," he answered, "I don't want you to pretend," and he left her again.

In the evening she went to walk alone by the brook; she had contrived to get rid of Alfred, for she was too much absorbed in her own sad thoughts to want other company, and she did not imagine that Redfern would dare to join her.

He did, however, and walked silently by her side for a few minutes. She did not tell him to go; she was secretly glad that he had come; though she felt dreary both in his presence and in his absence. She was hopelessly miserable when he was away from her, and angrily miserable when he was with her. That was all the difference. She had all the requisites for cheerfulness, a happy home, a sunny temper, admiring friends, and abundant pleasures; but she had chosen to put one wish above them all—the wish to please Redfern; and henceforth it seemed that the

need for his kindness was the chief part of her life, the one great sensation of existence.

The sunlight looked in upon them with level, blinding rays, through the bright green leaves of spring, and lighted up the brook with shining gleams on the rushing surface.

Violet wished that the sun would stop just there for a little, and not go on setting, taking the hours with it, for at this minute Redfern and she were almost at peace with one another, and that could not last for long.

She rather wished that he would not speak to her, and oblige her to answer distantly; but he had come on purpose to speak, and he only waited because, like her, he found the silence pleasant.

"Violet," he began, when they had turned round away from the sun, so that they followed their own long shadows as they walked, "would you rather that I went home sooner?"

She was startled, and looked at him at once.

"Yes," she said, drawing in a deep breath; "I think I should."

"I fancied so," he answered; "I will go on Monday then."

"Thank you," she said, quietly.

"I will please you that way, if in no other," he observed.

She knew that he spoke untruly, that it was she who failed to please him, and not he who could not satisfy her; but he was wilfully blind, and she had to leave him so.

The sun was sinking lower; it fell no more on the rushing brook, which had lost all its brightness, and flowed on in shadow. Violet gazed at the sun wistfully; it had brought her so many golden hours, and was taking the last away, and she had no choice but to hasten the departure of all her hopes.

"I could go to-morrow, if you wish it very

much," said Redfern; "they don't expect me, but that won't matter."

"No, Monday will do," she answered, turning away drearily. "We need not see much of each other."

Redfern walked back with her gloomily; he hardly knew her, in this unrelenting mood. She had taught him to rely on her kindness and ready forgiveness, till he had forgotten to think there must be an end to both. It was a lesson that it cost him much suffering to learn.

"I wish I had never come here," he observed suddenly.

"So do I," she answered, quickly and passionately; "I was happy before. I could please the people I cared for, and make them happier. It seemed right to be kind to everybody, and very easy too. With you it is all different; you treat me more unjustly the more anxious I am to do right; you

think my politeness means a permission to be rude to me; you mistake my kindness for a reason to judge me wrongly. The more I forgive you, the more unreasonable you are; and because I don't set a high price on my friendship, as if it were a thing of much value, you treat both it and myself with a great deal of contempt. But," she continued, as her eyes glowed rather than flashed, and the blue ribbon on her neck rose and fell with her impassioned breathing, though she kept her voice low and her hands still as she spoke, "though you have no respect at all for me, you mistake if you think I have no respect for myself. You imagine I have given way to all your fancies because I care nothing for my own dignity: I care for it so much, that I am not afraid your want of politeness can reach or hurt it. I am not meek and humble, if you ever fancied so——"

"I don't know that I ever fancied it," said Redfern.

"But," she went on, "I shall never stoop so low as to guard my self-esteem with coldness and pride. I can have no friends who will give me no respect unless I demand it; and so I would rather you would go, and I would rather you had never come, to teach me how hopeless it is to try to satisfy some people at any cost, or to trust that if you demand nothing and give all you can, you may at least be forgiven the folly, and politely tolerated afterwards."

"Yes," said Redfern, in a hard tone of repressed bitterness, "I was mad ever to come here. I will never do it again, you may be sure of that."

"Thank you," she said; "I hope while I am here that you never will."

With those last words she turned away and left him. She went to her own room

and sank on the floor, hiding her face on the bed.

"Oh, it is hard, it is hard!" she sobbed, with her hot forehead pressing against her hands; "I would have given him so much, all he could ask! and this is the end of it all! Why could it not have been somebody else, and not I, who should be forced to speak to him so?"

The tears in her eyes were very hot, but they were not many, and she soon ceased to hide her face, as she would have hidden her own heart and her own life from herself if she could. She sat on the hard floor and pressed her hands together, gazing straight before her with wide burning eyes, which her tears, undried and unheeded, could not cool.

Yes, she thought, it was best he should go, should depart at once out of her life, where she could not forget or ignore him. As long as he stayed, she could not escape

from the consciousness of his influence; she could not help—though she never spoke to him—watching for his coming and fearing his going; she listened for his voice, though she did not answer it; she knew when he approached her and when he went away; his step in the hall made her forget to go on talking, though she never raised her eyes when he entered the room; and she heard the least of his tones through the loud conversation of all others.

Yes; it was better he should go, and put an end to the struggling hope that was a perpetual and passionate disappointment; it would be something like peace when he had gone, if only a dreary and hopeless sort. It was better to be hopeless, for hope gave the strength to wish, and her heart ached with wishing uselessly, and feeling strongly in silence and disappointment.

It was better he should go, and better that

she should send him; it gave her a little courage to feel that she had still some choice; she could end her dreary waiting with her own will, and she was glad to end it, and tell him to go.

And yet — and yet — through all the summer days there would be a silence as heavy as the blackness that could be felt; it would be a silence that could be heard, that would speak to her continually, asking for one voice to fill it, and it would never be filled. Her whole life would be full of that silence, however much the singing of the birds and the sound of voices might try to reach through the outer doors of her heart to destroy it. There had been of late one light in the world for her only. It gave the colour and form to all that she saw; it had gone out now, and she must grope afterwards like a blind man, with dreary hands stretched out in the darkness, however others might bring her candles to light the way.

And Redfern—with something between a shiver and a sob, she thought of him gone wholly out of her reach, and realized that she might give him no help or comfort. Would his departure injure him with her grandfather? That was a new thought. Her eyebrows, which had been blank, and drearily raised in her hopeless gazing, contracted suddenly as she straightened herself from her listless attitude and began to think earnestly.

What if she helped him to lose Monkholme? if *she* were the one to spoil his prospects? She had told him to come no more; could she go away and leave him the opportunity again? Where was there to go to? She loved her grandfather, and she did not love her own home; she was only an interloper there, with no right place in it. She could marry, and leave him free to take her old rights at Monkholme; she thought

of Alfred, and her head fell forward on her hands again, while she sobbed hopelessly. She could not do *that* for him, never, never! and she remembered that he would probably refuse to take Monkholme unless he had it as hers; there was no way to reach and help him except through her own love, through herself, and she herself was worse than nothing to him.

So all her meditations brought her no new guidance; he must go, that was all, and she must ignore him and forget him if she could. After all, what was she, to think she had his destiny in her hands to make or mar? Was she so sure that her own love was a good gift, her own life a certain blessing to him? Had she not proved already how helpless and useless she was? Was there no one who loved him more than she did? who understood his nature better, and saw his wants more clearly? Her

simple faith told her that there was; and so, having found an answer to the problem of his life, she did not seek for one to her own; she only wept a little wearily, because she was so cheerless, and it did not matter, it never made any difference to the sunny world, whoever sobbed in secret misery; she had no right to ask for a better fate, and perhaps very few had it.

When she went down to the drawing-room, she sat down by her grandfather's knee, with her back to them all, so that they could not see her face. She did not try to talk, though she felt angry no more, only a little sad and very tired indeed. It was a long way through life to old age; she wondered how often people wearied on the road and thought they could go no further.

Mr. Hilborough again noticed her unusual stillness and silence; in her quietest moods there was generally a fulness of happy life

that made them far removed from melancholy. He was a little disturbed as he laid his hand on her bent head.

"You are very quiet again, Violet; dancing ought not to tire you for two whole days. Perhaps you want a little change of life; it is time for you to go home again to your mother for a few weeks—she may know how to take care of you better than I do."

"You take care of me well enough—too well," she said, speaking low, that Redfern might not hear—but he always heard when she spoke, however little he appeared to do; "only you are too kind to me. You spoil me."

"My dear!" said Mr. Hilborough, with a little dignity.

"Yes, you do," she persisted, lifting her head to look at him affectionately, with so much sadness in her eyes that he could not be angry, though he was little accustomed to

hear his own conduct called in question; "you are too good to me, and don't see when I do wrong. There are so many things a woman ought to know, and I have to find them out by myself; sometimes I find them out wrongly, and there is no one to tell me; you are not likely to notice."

"I should be very sorry to think," said Mr. Hilborough gravely, "that I had taken you from your own home to leave you to miss any care and teaching that you ought to have."

"It is not that. It is only that you don't find fault with me enough; you are a great deal too kind. But how can I tell how I ought to behave in many things? when I go out for instance? I want to do right, but I can't always."

"My dear," her grandfather answered, "you are young yet, and have time to learn; all your friends are content with you so far,

and will wait till you are a little older before they expect more wisdom."

"But I make so many mistakes," she continued, in a low, but clear voice, which she meant to be heard farther off, "and I seem to be worse than I am; it is not that I think I am right, or that I wish to do wrong, only I don't know better; I don't want to be unwomanly, or conceited, or forward, but I miss my way sometimes, and there is no woman to tell me when I get wrong."

There was a sound from the other end of the room; it was Redfern getting up and moving his chair away.

"That will do, Violet," said Mr. Hilborough, "you have blamed yourself quite enough for to-night, and I never understood that there was reason for any one else to blame you in the way you imagine. You shall go home before long, and tell your

difficulties to your mother; she will understand them better than I can."

Violet was silent. She had made her confession to Redfern, though she had addressed no word to him, and she was satisfied; she sat now without speaking, holding her grandfather's hand caressingly in hers, and resting her warm, soft cheek upon it. She felt very grateful for his love and trust at that moment, and was afraid of having wounded him by her regrets.

He comprehended that something, which he did not know of, had disturbed her, and so he left her to herself. Redfern was taciturn too, and remained out of the way, so Mr. Hilborough and Alfred kept up the conversation together.

"I met Green to-day; the man you turned off last autumn," Alfred said.

"Ah! Where is he working now?" Mr. Hilborough asked, and so they talked on

with ease, but not with great interest, for the rest of the evening, according to their old habits, while Violet went off into a dream, feeling a little consoled by the knowledge of how much these two cared for her, how important all her moods of sadness or joy seemed to them; and Redfern remained outside the circle, feeling gloomily that he had no right within it, and that Violet was well protected by the affection about her from all hurt that his love or his injustice could do her.

Certainly she was safe unless she herself gave him the power to trouble her, but was she a woman who could calculate all dangers to her own happiness before she gave away her love?

Redfern joined the group at last. He came and stood close to Violet. She did not look up at him, though his approach made her cheeks burn, while she kept her head

bent; she only saw that he stood a few feet from her, and she listened for his voice, notwithstanding that she knew he had not come to address her.

"I am going home on Monday, uncle," he began. "Has Violet told you?" He spoke her name with a little difficulty.

"No. Going! You were to stay till the end of the week."

"Yes, but I am going on Monday now. I am obliged to you for asking me to stay longer." Redfern was not one of those who could do an ungracious thing graciously, and his manner was stiff and cold.

Violet could not look up; she played nervously with Mr. Hilborough's passive fingers.

"Of course, if you are tired of us all and of being here," her grandfather's voice said politely, but rather sternly, "it will be better for you to go."

"It is not so. You have all been wonderfully kind. I don't want to seem ungrateful," answered Redfern in short, abrupt sentences; "but the fact is that I have quarrelled with Violet, so it is quite time I went."

"Indeed!" replied Mr. Hilborough, his fingers closing firmly on his grand-daughter's. "You must have behaved very badly to manage that."

"You are perfectly right," he answered quietly.

Violet's hand tightened its nervous grasp; she looked up at her grandfather with the old courage that was by no means unconsciousness of fear, for she knew that she had done something peculiarly displeasing to him, and she was about to confess it.

"I must tell you. It is not Redfern's fault. He vexed me, so I have told him to go."

"Have you indeed?" Mr. Hilborough

asked, his manner to her changed almost imperceptibly from the coldness with which he had addressed Redfern to simple gravity; "that was not kind of you."

"Was it not?" she asked; "it vexes me very much not to be kind"

She looked at him and not at Redfern, to whom she never turned her eyes that night, and there was a white wistfulness about her face, in her steady unhopeful eyes, that touched him, and made him feel very much the want of a woman in his house to give the sympathy he had not. He had always felt it since he lost his wife; very often it had oppressed him in dealing with his son, whose nature he knew that he did not comprehend; and now he felt the need of some one who could more fully understand these two natures, Redfern's and Violet's—they seemed to be at variance in some way, each to want a little sympathy and comprehension to help

them to a better knowledge of themselves; a woman, his wife, or his son's wife, if she had been such a woman as he could have liked, might have given it; but he felt helpless, and could only leave Violet to find her way alone out of her difficulties and troubles.

"I am sure it does, my dear," he answered simply.

Redfern was knocking the fender impatiently with his foot, quite unconscious of the noise he produced; he was vexed to hear Violet transferring the fault of his conduct to herself.

"It is absurd to suppose that Violet could help it," he said quickly; "any one who knows us both must know who is to blame if we quarrel."

"Any one who knows you both must wonder that you should quarrel at all," answered Mr. Hilborough.

"I think not. I can manage the most

difficult thing in that line," Redfern said in a hard, dry tone, and left the room.

Mr. Hilborough turned to Violet, who watched him still with her sad gray eyes, as if she asked for his help or comfort. "Be patient with him if you can, my dear," he said kindly; "I don't think he has ever been very happy, as you have."

Violet did not answer; she rose and kissed him silently, and there was a great deal of gratitude as well as tenderness in her kiss.

She thanked him much more in her heart for that kind thought of Redfern than she could have done for any consolation to herself.

CHAPTER XI.

TRUTH SPOKEN TRULY.

Hubert Lloyd had not appeared at Monkholme for several days; no news had been heard from the vicarage in the meantime; but early on Saturday morning Clara Lloyd called to see Violet. She had a long and earnest conversation with her. Redfern and Alfred were in the room, but she addressed none of it to them, and spoke in low tones. They heard, therefore only scraps of it.

"Mamma said of course we must do as he wished. . . . . It was natural she should be glad to secure him, but we wish he had waited a little. . . . . Papa says it is just

what he expected, and I am sure it is unjust to Hubert to say so . . . . a dear little thing, we are all fond of her . . . . if she had been clever she would have been more what he ought to have . . . . we shall be glad if you will come with us."

After talking with much appearance of earnestness and mystery, Clara departed with the air of a person who is concerned in important events, and is therefore indifferent to ordinary persons, and barely noticed the young men in the room.

"Has anything particular been going on at the vicarage?" Alfred asked carelessly, after she had gone. "Miss Lloyd seemed to have a great deal to say."

"Only that Mary Alworthy came on a visit to the vicarage yesterday, and that Hubert Lloyd is engaged to her."

Alfred lifted his eyebrows.

"Hubert was just the sort of a fellow one

might expect to be a long time in settling down ; he never seemed to come to any particular point in anything. Isn't it rather sudden ?"

"No," answered Violet, "I have known for a long time that it was likely to happen. He used to come here on her account when she stayed with me last summer."

"So Clara came to tell you. She did not lose much time."

"She came to ask us to go with them to Ilsbech Tarn ; they are making a kind of expedition there this afternoon, and she said if any of us liked to walk with them they should be very glad. It would of course be dull for Clara and Lucy with only those two."

"Shall you go ?"

"Yes, I promised. We might as well ; there is nothing else to be done."

Violet thought, too, that in the midst of

other persons it might be easier to avoid Redfern, and perhaps to forget him.

"All right," said Alfred, "I'm quite ready."

"Did your promise include me?" Redfern inquired, after waiting for a moment to hear if any one mentioned him.

"No," Violet answered; "I left you to please yourself."

Redfern made no reply, and did not again refer to the subject till the afternoon; then, when Violet went into the drawing-room ready dressed to go out, she found him there alone, drumming impatiently with his fingers on the window-pane.

"Aren't you going?" she inquired.

"I don't know. I haven't the least idea whether I'm wanted or not," he replied, without looking round.

"You might as well go," she said; "perhaps you will like it; there will be Clara and Lucy to talk to."

"Very well," he answered abruptly, and left the room to get ready.

Alfred and Violet started without him, and met the vicarage party at the foot of the hill just as he overtook them.

Miss Alworthy was with them; she was a blooming little creature, all smiles and dimples, and almost like a child in her expression and manners. Hubert looked down on her with a satisfied air of possession, and had already begun to exercise an affectionate tyranny over her. She ran to meet Violet with much eagerness, and kissed her enthusiastically.

"Oh, you dear thing," she said, "I am so glad to see you. And he says I can't like you too much, because you have always been so kind to him, and knew all about it long ago."

Hubert looked quite proud of her childishness and prettiness, and smiled with a very

handsome and tender superiority when she turned to him.

"I said much more than that," he observed, "but she had better not tell you what, otherwise you might be angry, as you don't like compliments."

Mary was beaming upon Violet, while Hubert beamed down on Mary, with a manner which said, "She belongs to me; is not she really a delightful little thing now?"

"You know," continued Mary, "I was really quite jealous at first, until he said I was a little goose, and then I did not mind."

"Aren't you a little goose still?" suggested Hubert, smiling benignly.

Clara and Lucy had listened silently; they took it for granted that all the world was interested in their brother's affairs. Alfred gazed calmly and blankly before him into the distance, till the little gush of words

should be over; he was always polite, and never in a hurry; he was also incapable of being bored, he seemed able to suspend his existence till it was again required, and to be troubled by no sensations in the intervals. Redfern, of course, felt out of his element, but he was very much interested in what was going on. It seemed very curious to him that Violet should be "so kind" to these people and to him too, when they belonged to such different classes of character, and required such opposite qualities to please them. He felt that he was utterly wrong in trying to interpret her actions by his own disposition; her nature was certainly the wider, though his might be the deeper of the two.

After they began to ascend the steep sides of the gorge, the party became divided into groups. Hubert and Mary went on far in front, Mary running into all sorts of difficult places, and Hubert helping her out, and

letting her admire his conversation in return. Clara attached herself to Violet, and proceeded very gravely and methodically to talk about her brother's engagement; how it had all happened, and what everybody had said or had not said about the affair. She neither turned her head to the right nor to the left to look at anything, but picked her way carefully, and talked all the while in a quiet and rather monotonous tone.

Alfred found it somewhat dull to be with her after a little; he was tired of receiving short observations in return for the assistance he gave her.

"Thank you—so mamma said she might as well come." "I shall manage very well. Her aunt, you know, who lived so long in India." "Your other hand, please. Thanks. And we went twice to their house with Hugh."

This was very interesting to Clara Lloyd,

but Alfred was glad at last to fall back on the remaining two, and hear Lucy and Redfern talking together. Lucy did not consider him very "deep" or very interesting, but she occasionally granted him an observation.

"Oh! Mr. Redfern, but you don't really think there used to be such curious animals, do you?" she asked, with great interest.

"I never think at all," answered Redfern gravely, "unless I'm paid for it. It is too wearing to the brain."

"You know what I mean. Is it your opinion that there were?"

"What's the use of having opinions of your own when you can so easily take other persons' out of books? I never have any."

"You won't tell me, that's what you mean," said Lucy; "you would rather I did not know."

"That is true," assented Redfern, "other-

wise you might know how little there is to know."

"That is just like clever people," she answered, "to pretend not to know anything."

"There is now *one* point of resemblance between me and clever people," remarked Redfern, "it is nice to be sure of that."

"What *does* he think really, Mr. Alfred?" said Lucy, turning to Alfred; "can't you tell me?"

"I never asked him," said Alfred.

"What do *you* think then?" she persisted.

Then Alfred plunged a little into geology, of which he really knew a great deal, though Lucy was obstinate in believing that Redfern knew a great deal more if he could be induced to tell it; and Lucy said that it was very wonderful, and, for her part, she would rather not believe it, because if you did you

were never sure of things. She made this profound observation in a mystical and impressive manner, as if she felt she hardly understood herself, and that nobody else understood her at all, but that was owing to the depth of the subject, and not to any want of clearness in her own mind.

They reached the hill-top above the gorge. It was all calm in sunlight under a blue sky. The brown stones, tumbled about the edge of the water, were stained with lichen, and the moss grew all over the marshy reach of land that stretched away from it, rounding up to meet the base of the precipices about; before them the water was blue, behind them it changed to slate colour as they walked along its margins. In the distance a few purple peaks looked over the tops of near, dark rocks; all the rest of the scene was brown or gray.

It was a dull, lonely place that wanted the

brightness of foliage and flowers; no birds were singing there, only from a piled-up heap of rocks one of the brown stones seemed to rise and sail heavily and slowly away, striking the air silently with great, steady wings.

Redfern had never been there since his Robinson Crusoe expedition. It looked a different place now, but there was enough resemblance, in spite of the difference, to call up the memories of that past time.

He gradually became absorbed in his own recollections, and escaped from Lucy, whom he left draining Alfred on the subject of geology, and crowding her mind with an incongruous mixture of remarkable facts and contradictory beliefs. He got out of the crowd of the others, who sat down and amused themselves by throwing stones into the tarn, and he made his way across the damp mosses, past the scattered stones with

streams trickling everywhere between, and over the tumbled rocks at the base of the precipice. He reached the hole where he had tried to exist without the obnoxious world, and there he found Violet standing by herself, and looking away absently across the hills.

She gave him a quaint little unsteady smile, and turned to go.

"Don't run away," he said hastily; "what a long time it is since all that happened! How brave you were that night!"

"Was I?" she said musingly; "I think we sometimes don't want courage, but only the right to be brave."

"Yet I never gave you any reason to be good to me," he went on. "Was I ever so disagreeable to you then as I am now?"

"So disagreeable?" she said, hesitatingly.

"So unkind," amended Redfern, "if you are too polite to use the other word."

"No," she answered quickly, looking at him for one moment; "indeed you never were."

Then she hastened away over the rocks to join the others.

He followed slowly; when he reached them all, he found Mary and Hubert talking to Violet, and all about themselves, making her the convenient third person on whom to pour out all their enthusiasm and high spirits.

"But you know I don't believe him one bit," said Mary to Violet.

"Not you," answered Hubert, smiling tender protection at her; "and she said, 'Tell me some more nice things like that, they are delightful.'"

"But I told you I knew it was nonsense all the time," said Mary.

"It's a great deal better than any sense," said Hubert.

"Oh yes, of course!" said Mary.

Redfern sat behind them and heard it all silently; he felt indignant that Violet should not be the first person, the one most to be considered, though he had been by no means pleased when she had been. He was inclined to talk no more as they walked back to the top of the gorge.

Violet made her way down in rather a solitary manner, and Redfern occupied himself in watching her, as it seemed nobody else's business to do so just then, for Alfred was engaged in helping Clara and Lucy down the deep descent.

The place looked beautiful then: the rushing water was beside them, breaking out into white foam that sparkled in the sunlight, falling over the rock in a smooth, clear sheet, or lying dark and cool in a quiet basin before plunging down again. Over the stones in the way the ivy twisted itself into wreaths,

and it climbed up some of the trees, and spread out luxuriantly from the cracks in the rocks above. The tall dark firs rose straight and still from the sides of the hill, making a perpetual gloom under the low dark branches, and other trees hung over the stream, light and feathery in their early spring green. At their feet—seen always beyond a short distance of broken ground, green and gray with stone and ivy—there was the valley, with its church-spire rising from the trees, looking as if they could have thrown a stone into its graveyard from where they stood.

There were flowers too, and Hubert and Mary tore up forget-me-nots, while Lucy hunted assiduously for rare specimens. But Violet had no interest in them; she was absorbed in remembering her lonely descent in the darkness and storm, and she went on absently, paying little heed to the road she

took. She was unusually careless about her method of descending; generally she was careful and sure-footed, but now she appeared to have forgotten the difficulties of the road, and found her way safely down the rough rocks and between the bushes, more from habit than attention. She went once out of the path to look at the stream; scrambling over some intervening rocks to reach it. Redfern followed, but no one else noticed her. She stood on the narrow edge of a great stone to look at the quiet water; there was a deep pool of it at her feet, into which the stone sloped away. On the other side the rock bent over the basin; there was a perpetual drip of water from its top, and on its damp undersurface the green wet moss and the pale small ferns were growing. It could be seen far down into the still water, and Violet stood to look in the cool, clear depths; she moved off the angular edge of the big stone

on to the sloping part, which was damp and mossy. It was more slippery than she had expected, so that her foot gave way, and she would have fallen into the pool if some one had not sprung forward and caught her round the waist.

It was Redfern, and his strong arm held her firmly until she had regained her footing; he did not speak, but his heart was beating as it had never done before.

She never thanked him; she turned to him with sad eyes, and looked at him as if to utter in one glance all the sorrow that was in her heart, and for that moment her face as she moved it towards him touched his shoulder, and was very near his.

She said, "Oh, Redfern!" in a voice that broke down into a sob, and then she sprang away over the rocks, and left him alone.

She went on very fast after that, and seemed afraid of being spoken to; Redfern

wanted to address her, but did not know how.

That little incident—above all, that one moment in which he had held her fast, and she had turned to him a face all tender sadness—had changed his feeling of passive disappointment into active longing and impatience. Why had she chosen so to express all her sorrow, whatever it might be, to him? as if, indeed, it belonged to him, and he could understand it. He could not analyze his own precise intentions as he climbed down the glen after the rest of the party; he only felt a strong necessity to speak to Violet, to express some of his own feelings to her, and try to reach hers in return. He had only that blind desire for some communication, of whatever sort, between their two minds, which can become overwhelming, and override all obstacles of pride, anger, and difference.

He overtook her at last, swinging round a tree-trunk into the narrow pathway beside her.

"Violet," he said hurriedly, "will you drop behind the others for a little, and give me a chance of speaking to you? I can't stand this any longer. I must say something."

She looked at him with a startled face, and answered:

"No, no, I would much rather not. I can't," and sprang down the stone quickly out of his way.

He was disappointed and almost angry, because he had appealed to her so eagerly, and she had answered so hastily. He followed alone, and did not attempt to rejoin her.

Violet was troubled and perplexed; her resolutions were all in favour of talking to Redfern no more, yet all her longing was

only to wait for him and hear whatever he chose to say.

When Redfern reached the foot of the hill, she was walking slowly behind the others across the level meadow with its long, straight path, over which the branches of the great chestnuts stretched in masses of heavy green. She did not hasten when she heard his quick steps behind; he took his place beside her, and walked slowly as she did.

"Were you waiting for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, quite simply, without offering an explanation.

The yellow buttercups stood tall in the green grass, and large dog-daisies gave a milky tint to some places; the sweet scent of the hawthorn came from the distant hedge; behind it cows were feeding quietly in the meadow.

'You had something to say, had you not?" said Violet.

"May I wait a little? Need I begin just now?" he asked.

"Not unless you like," Violet answered.

So they went on between the tall green grass, among which the flowers were growing thickly; over them the solitary stately trees flung shadows at intervals; before them the orchard was white with blossom, the gray gables of Monkholme rose, dappled with green, above it; a lark was singing high up in the blue sky; it dropped down with a sudden hush in its music into the meadow near them.

"We have not things like that in town," said Redfern suddenly.

"Why don't you live here, then?" Violet answered. "This ought all to be yours."

"Not it, indeed," replied Redfern; "it suits you, and not me."

"But if you were here always," she said, "that would make a difference."

"By no means. Just consider, if you had worn a bonnet till the soot of the town had spoilt it, would you bring it into the fresh country for improvement? It would only look grimier there."

"I think you are wrong," she said.

"About the bonnet?"

"No, about yourself."

They reached the orchard, and stood there under the white trees, upon the spare, coarse grass; the rest of the party had dispersed without waiting for them.

"Have you not something to say?" Violet asked.

"Yes, only I don't know how to begin."

"Need you say it at all?"

"Yes, I must. I should like you to know, but give me another minute; after I have spoken I will ask for none."

"Very well," said Violet, and she sat down

on an old tree-trunk that lay on the ground, and waited.

"I suppose you think I dislike you very much," Redfern began suddenly, looking over her head to the hedge beyond.

"I don't know," answered Violet, starting and flushing; then she added hastily, "if you are going to say something disagreeable, please don't. I would rather not quarrel before you go."

"I am not," Redfern answered, with a harsh tone in his voice; "you think it impossible, I suppose, that I can say anything that is not unpleasant."

"You very often do say unpleasant things," said Violet, in a low voice.

"I know I do, and to you especially, and it is all because I like you better than any one else in the world."

Violet started again, and looked up at him quickly; he gave a hasty glance, and looked

away, as if he could not bear to meet her eyes while he spoke.

"It's true; though it seems absurd," he said, "I am rude to you, I am unkind to you, I am unjust to you, I quarrel with everything you do, and I act so as to make you detest me. It is my way of loving; that is all."

She said, "Oh Redfern!" her earnest eyes fell, her cheeks flushed, and she let her face drop into her hands.

He glanced at her again, and back to the hedge, where a wren was singing very loudly.

"That was what I wanted to tell you," he observed.

"Redfern," she said, lifting her face a little, and speaking timidly, "don't you think you are making a mistake?"

"I *know* I am not," he answered, rather hoarsely.

There was silence for a few moments, while the wren finished its song; then, as the quietness grew oppressive after the noisy music, Redfern asked:

"Are you angry with me?"

"Angry? No! Why should I be?"

"It seems an impertinence to be downright rude to you, and to tell you I like you as an explanation afterwards."

"No, no," said Violet, and she could not say any more.

"At any rate, I did not want you to think I did not really, in spite of everything, appreciate you. I wished you to know the truth before I went."

"Need you go?" asked Violet softly.

"Why not?" he asked, rather hardly; "staying will only make things worse. I have made a fool of myself. If I had ever meant to care for any one, it should have been for some sensible and selfish woman,

who would not have felt my unkindness, and would not have spoilt me by her own self-denial; but you——"

He broke off, and laughed a little bitterly.

"Yes?" said Violet, gently.

"You! Am I fit to have anything to do with you? If I had been mad enough to like you, I have not at any rate asked you to like me in return. As if you could! Never mind. I shall do very well by myself; and I hope, at least I try to hope, that some much better man than I shall ever be will have your life in his keeping."

"I wish you wouldn't," said Violet, in a troubled voice, "I don't like to hear you talk so."

"Then I'll stop. As I have said all I wanted, I will go away and leave you alone."

She lifted her head from her hands and looked at him earnestly.

"Why should you?" she asked.

"Why should I stay?" he answered impatiently. "There is nothing more to be said."

"Yes, perhaps you had better go," she said, hiding her face again; "I don't know what to say to you now."

He went away, and she sat in the orchard alone. It was a long time before she left the old tree. She could not even think of what had been or was going to be; she was conscious only of a great change in her life, of a new knowledge that was delicious to her, and yet a little sad.

She got up at last, and went indoors. She arranged her hair for dinner slowly, with a new interest in it; she was in some way much more precious to herself now Redfern cared about her, and the merest trifle about what she was, or did, seemed important, now that it might or might not please him.

When she went downstairs, it was with another manner than the listless one that had belonged to her for the last few days. There was a subdued glow in her eyes, and a quiet, happy consciousness in her ways, as if something very good had happened to her, and raised her above the rest of the world, so that she could afford to be yielding and gentle to them all.

She and Redfern spoke to each other no more than they had lately done, but it was evident that they were good friends again. Redfern permitted himself to listen so intently to all she said, that she was almost afraid of talking at all, and though he did not speak to her, he spoke for her whenever he could.

After they had gone into the drawing-room, Violet went to stand alone by the window, half hidden by the curtain there. Redfern hesitated about going to her, but at

last could not resist the temptation of a little more intercourse, now that their estrangement was over.

She did not smile a greeting, as was her habit—she was too much in earnest to be merely pleasant; she had not precisely expected him to join her, she had simply wanted him very urgently to come. Now he was there, and she took no notice of him.

The sun had set; a crimson glow was left behind it in the sky, against which the hill-tops looked black and high.

"I have not a view like this at home," said Redfern, "but at any rate the sky is the same."

"Yes," assented Violet.

She wanted to say something more, but she could not. Redfern seemed quite satisfied with the silence, and only watched the sunset colours. Violet at length found courage to speak.

"Need you go home on Monday?" she asked in a low tone.

Redfern started, and awoke from his pleasant abstraction.

"Why not?" he answered. "Staying will only make things worse. I had better get out of the way as soon as possible."

"Why should you?" she asked.

"Don't you see that the longer I stay here the more I get to like you? There is only one thing that could make it endurable to remain at Monkholme, and that is impossible."

"What is it?" she asked, in a tone like a whisper.

"That you should like me in return," he answered; "don't ask me again to stay unless you mean that you will."

He turned and walked impatiently away.

Violet remained at the window till it grew quite dark; then, when candles came,

she sat down with her sewing, and never raised her eyes from it, though she made little progress. She was too happy to work or to speak; now she had her fate in her own hands, and was in no hurry to seal it; the first page of this book of love was so sweet that she lingered before turning the leaf.

She gave Redfern no further look or word, though her thoughts were of nothing but him; she waited till bed-time came, and she had said good-night to the other two, then it happened that Redfern was holding the door open for her.

She gave him her hand as usual, and said good-night, then, as she turned away, she said in a low voice, with a quick look at him:

"Don't go home on Monday."

He caught her hand again and held it fast.

"Do you know what that means?" he asked.

She glanced at him, and away again with soft, troubled eyes.

"Yes," she said, "let me go," and tried to pull her fingers away.

"But do you mean it?" he persisted earnestly. "Have you thought?"

"Yes, I have indeed. I know quite well," she answered, softly but hurriedly, "only let me go to-night. Please!"

He loosed her hand, and she fled, just as Alfred looked round to see what so much talking was about. Redfern went back to the two gentlemen.

"This is a curious world," Mr. Hilborough remarked, putting down a book he had been reading.

"Yes," said Redfern, with a peculiar radiance in his quiet face, "I have only just found out what sort of a place it is."

"Are you sure you know yet, my lad?" Mr. Hilborough asked, looking at him with grave, kind interest.

"If I don't, I would rather go no further, and find out nothing else," said Redfern, smiling quietly.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ONE WHO WENT AND THE ONE WHO STAYED.

VIOLET'S eyes opened the next morning to a very beautiful world, or at least she thought it so; it had given her all she wanted from it, and seemed full of pleasant things from the dark west to the rosy east. She was so happy to think that Redfern cared for her, that she could hardly believe it true, and yet it seemed the most natural thing in the world, the crowning point of existence, for which she had lived up to this time.

She was rather afraid of looking at Redfern, or speaking to him until they had had a fuller explanation, and he was quite capable

of waiting for a good opportunity before asking her to say more, instead of snatching a hasty word.

So they hardly uttered a sentence to each other over breakfast, and afterwards, when Violet had dressed for church, she found them all waiting for her in the hall. Mr. Hilborough took possession of her, and she walked with him, and had no chance of speaking to Redfern then. She was not sorry for the delay. She knew enough to make her contented for some time, and could have wished the service to be longer. They had an old-fashioned square pew, in which she sat, as usual, next to her grandfather. Alfred found all her places, as was his custom, and Redfern sat in a corner out of the way. She was quite satisfied to have so much more apparent attention from the others than from him; she knew that she was only his, and that he loved her: no trifles could

disturb her while she had that consciousness.

When they left the church, Redfern made an attempt to walk back with Violet, but Alfred was in the way, and he had to go on with Mr. Hilborough. Violet understood it, and was vexed. When they got a little further, however, they saw the Vicarage party turning down a lane. Hubert stopped and called out good-morning, so Alfred went to speak to him.

"I'll join you by the stile," he said as he left her.

Violet walked on by Mr. Hilborough's side; once she spoke to Redfern, and ventured to look at him; his face was a little grave as he glanced at her.

A few moments after she stopped to look at a flower in the hedge, and then tried to reach it; that was an unusual proceeding for Sunday, but she was beginning to be a little

afraid of Redfern's seriousness. He went on for a minute with his uncle, then, with a muttered explanation, went back and plucked the flower for her.

Mr. Hilborough had walked on; Alfred and the Lloyds were out of sight; Violet was bending over the hedge when Redfern put the flower in her fingers. She turned round, and they stood in the lane for a minute alone, looking at one another.

"Violet," said Redfern, as if that was a complete sentence, and he looked earnestly at her.

"Yes," she answered, her eyes falling before his.

"Did you mean all I hoped when you asked me to stay?"

"Yes," she said, and moved on up the lane, her cheeks flushing deeper.

He walked beside her, and continued to watch her face.

"You can't like me really," he said, "there is nothing about me to be liked, and I have been even more disagreeable to you than I am to others."

"Yes, but I do."

"Is not it because you are just kind, and don't like me or any one to be unhappy?"

"It is because I am kind to myself, not to you."

"You are not, even if you think so. Is it true, really? May I believe it?"

"Did I ever tell you an untruth?" she asked, glancing quickly at him.

"No," he answered abruptly, "you like me. Yes—though that's odd. But—Violet—do you *love* me?" he asked, looking at her earnestly.

"Oh, yes, don't you know?" she whispered, with a long sigh of contentment.

He said no more, but he took her hand and put it on his arm, clasping his own

fingers over it; and so they went on up the lane.

"Violet," he said at length, in a low voice, "I do love you very much, with all my heart; I wish you could know how much; but I don't think I shall help to make you happy."

She lifted her bent head to look at him steadily and earnestly.

"I would rather be unhappy for your sake, than happy with anybody else in the world."

"Are you unhappy now?"

"Oh, no!" and she looked away and smiled.

"What made you like me?" asked Redfern. "Is it because I am cross and disagreeable?"

"I don't know," said Violet, "only I do."

"Don't you think you will get tired of it after a little, when you are used to being

grumbled at and treated badly? Won't you want some one nicer in the end?"

"If you will let me go on caring for you, I know I never shall be tired," she answered.

"If I will let you! Oh, Violet, do you think anything so good as your kindness ever came to me before?"

His hand pressed more closely on hers, and she looked at him again for a long minute; they read each other's thoughts in that gaze, and knew—however much they might forget it afterwards—how completely they loved one another then.

After that look into her clear, tender eyes, Redfern was inclined to ask for no more words; they went on silently, until they reached a by-path coming from the fields; then Violet drew her hand away, and Alfred got over the stile and joined them.

That little explanation altered Redfern's manner; he took charge openly of Violet,

and waited on her in Alfred's place. Alfred was rather mystified, but did not suppose it mattered much or meant anything.

When the early dinner was over, Redfern and Mr. Hilborough went into the drawing-room together, and found Violet there. Redfern went up to her at once, and asked if she was going to the Sunday-school.

"No," said Violet. "Mary Alworthy begged me to let her take my class this afternoon."

"Then will you go a walk with me?"

"Yes, if you would like."

She left the room to get ready, and when she returned Alfred was there too.

"Are you going out?" he said. "I will go with you."

Violet looked somewhat dismayed.

"Thank you," she said, "you need not. I promised——" She turned to Redfern.

"You need not trouble to go," he said

quietly to Alfred. "I am going with Violet, and can take care of her."

Alfred looked from one to the other in perplexity, while Violet's face flushed, and Redfern remained quite cool and satisfied.

"I see," said Alfred, slowly, and his own calm face flushed a little too. "You don't want me."

"Not that," said Violet, rather distressed; but Redfern spoke for her.

"No, we don't, just this afternoon," he observed quietly. "You don't mind, I suppose?"

Alfred was left to indulge in some new and rather unpleasant speculations, while Redfern and Violet took a long walk up a winding, climbing lane, that wandered over the hill behind the house.

They did not speak much of themselves or their love for each other; that seemed too good and sacred a thing to be talked about;

their confession would have been spoilt by repetition. To tell what they felt once meant everything; to tell it twenty times could only have meant less.

So they talked of other things, and showed the consciousness of their new position more by their complete confidence in each other than by discussion of it. Redfern said the most, which was unusual; he had never spoken so freely to any one before. Violet seemed to care for his least thoughts, to comprehend them at once, and to like him all the same even when she did not agree with him. As he talked, she wondered to find how little selfishness there was in the depths of all his wishes and motives, and what clear, true ideas he had of many things she had only guessed at. It was delightful to her to listen, and it was delightful to him to trust her so fully, and to know that she cared to hear all he could say. They discussed the

most distant subjects, for everything they spoke of then seemed interesting, because it helped them to understand each other better. And yet they were happy without talking at all; only to be able to look at one another and smile in the delicious consciousness of mutual youth and love was sufficient, and it was delightful to know that there was all life before them in which to go on caring for each other.

If ever they were utterly happy, it was that sunny spring afternoon; perfect happiness in its intensity is somewhat akin to pain; but they were conscious of none then.

Everything seemed so good to Violet; her cup of life was so filled to overflowing with happiness, that she was almost afraid to move at all, lest any might run over and be lost; she dreaded even the change of letting all the world know her good fortune. It was not so with Redfern; he wished to understand

everything at once, and was quite anxious to have his explanation with Mr. Hilborough.

"Yes; I shall like grandpapa to know," said Violet, musing, though she was rather afraid of publicity and congratulations; for how could anybody know exactly how her life was changed? Nobody else had ever felt just the same before, and why should they venture to talk about it?

"I shall like him to know, because he will be so glad."

"He ought to have more judgment than to be glad," said Redfern, laughing at her earnest and sunny face.

"I dare say he ought; we are all foolish except you," she retorted; "but really, would not to-morrow do as well as to-day to tell him?"

"Well, if you like. Just imagine, though, my suspense in the meantime. Suppose he

says, 'Begone, young man, and darken my doors no more!'"

"Suppose he does?"

"Then I won't begone!"

"Won't you? Ah, you would," she said, with a little laugh.

"Let us hope I shan't be tried. But, you see, I might make my little statement after you have retired."

"Then I should be so curious that I could not go to sleep."

"So I am not to know my fate properly till to-morrow?"

"Oh, please yourself; I don't really care. Do just as you think best."

"Thank you," he said, quite seriously, so that she looked inquiringly at him, and was sorry she had objected.

"I like to get things over," he observed.

"Yes, it is best; and I really want grand-

papa to know. It is only other people I care about; Alfred, for instance."

"I don't see that it matters about Alfred. You have never promised to marry *him*, I suppose?"

"Oh no," said Violet, with a crimson face.

"Then he can't have anything to do with it," said Redfern, rather crossly.

"Of course not," assented Violet, after which she looked at him solemnly for a minute, and then they both laughed.

"You are so absurd," said Violet.

"And so are you," he answered, which retort ended the conversation.

Redfern and Violet were in the highest spirits for the rest of the day, but Alfred was rather silent and gloomy. In the evening—before they all separated for the night—they were assembled about the fireplace in the drawing-room. Redfern ad-

dressed Mr. Hilborough when no one else happened to be speaking.

"I am not going home to-morrow," he said, "if you will allow me to stay."

Alfred looked round at him instantly.

"I am glad you have changed your mind," said Mr. Hilborough.

"Violet asked me," Redfern explained, "so I thought if you did not mind——"

"I am pleased that she did so."

"You may not say so when you know what a price she has paid for it," observed Redfern.

"I am not very much afraid," Mr. Hilborough answered.

Violet got up rather hastily, with a flushed face.

"Then you and Redfern are friends again?" Mr. Hilborough asked, regarding her attentively, with his two hands on her shoulders, after she had come to him to say good-night.

"Yes," said Violet, looking at him anxiously. "Please to say you are very glad."

"I am very glad indeed," he answered, and kissed her.

"Thank you," she said, and escaped.

Alfred had risen to open the door for her, but Redfern was there before him; she could not stop, however, to speak, and ran upstairs without shaking hands. He went back to the others, and Alfred began to understand that he was wanted to go, that Redfern was waiting for his departure; so he went without further delay, hardly knowing the world in which he found himself now, where he was completely forgotten, and all he had hoped for was lost to him.

"I want to talk to you to-night," Redfern said to his uncle when they were alone.

"We will wait till to-morrow," Mr. Hilborough said quietly, "it is late now."

"But after you have heard me you may not wish me to stay here."

"If Violet is satisfied, I shall be," he said. "I think I mean as much as you can hope for when I say that; so rest content. We won't begin long subjects to-night."

He put out his hand; Redfern said, "Thank you," as he shook it, as Violet had done, and went away without any fears.

In the morning Mr. Hilborough intimated to Redfern that he was ready to talk to him in the library, so the two retired there for a conference that proved very lengthy.

Violet sat in the breakfast-room waiting, and wondered very much, though she was not afraid. Alfred was in an uneasy state of mind; he wandered about the house, and seemed to be wanted nowhere. Violet seemed disinclined to notice him; she said

"Yes" and "No," to all his remarks, and started if a distant door opened. He went into the library once, and Mr. Hilborough ceased talking till he had gone out again. At length he made up his mind, walked once round the garden as if to look at everything there, and then went into the house to Violet.

"Redfern is staying longer, I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Violet, glancing uneasily at him.

"Then I will go," he said; "there is a late train to-night."

"Why should you?" she asked, trembling a little.

"I begin to see that there is not room for both of us," he answered.

Violet replied nothing; she tried to thread her needle, but her fingers were too unsteady.

"What price have you paid for his stay-

ing?" he asked quickly. "What did he mean? Have you promised to marry him?"

"Yes," she answered, putting her needle down hopelessly.

"Just so," he replied, getting up and walking away. "I thought as much."

Violet made no observation.

"Of course, after this there is nothing for me to do but to go," he said.

"I don't know why you should," she said eagerly. "You have always been like a brother to me, I don't see why you should change now. Do you think I shall like you less because I like him more?"

"I am not your brother, and I never wished to be. Ever since I was a boy I have always hoped that you would be my wife. I never had any other thought, and I wonder you did not know it. But there, I beg your pardon, I have no right to blame you. You never promised anything."

"Of course not," said Violet, with a little indignation, "you never even told me."

"No," answered Alfred. "I was told to wait. Uncle said I was too young, and ought not to speak to you till I came of age. I shall be twenty-one in two months now; my speaking will do much good then."

"I am very sorry," said Violet, "but I never knew."

"I thought you understood; I suppose you would have done if you had cared to do; it all comes to the same thing—you were certain to like Redfern better than me. I don't know what's in him that makes everyone give him more than he wants. I like him myself immensely, and I am sure I don't know why."

Violet was grateful to him for the last observation, and inclined to be lenient.

"I wish you did not care," she said, "because we all like each other so much,

that nothing would seem to be wrong if you didn't; but you won't mind it long, and we shall always be friends."

"I shall mind it. Uncle told me I was too young to know my own wishes properly, and that I must not disturb your mind till I was more sure of my own. I am rather too sure. Never mind, Violet," he said, coming back to her. "I don't want to vex you; you have always been too good to me."

"I am so sorry," she answered, looking at him mournfully and kindly; "perhaps I have been wrong. I ought to have thought about this; but it seemed so nice to like one another as we had always done, and not to consider about such things; and, indeed, I do like you very much, and I always shall."

"Yes," he assented, "you will always be kind to me, I know. It is a habit you

have of going on when you have once begun."

"I shall always care for you, which is different," she said. "Do you think I can ever forget how much you have been to me all these years? You have never ceased to be good and kind; I could not stop liking you, if I wanted to do."

"Not if Redfern asked you?"

"He never will," she answered.

"I know that. He is generous. Well, I will go. He is twenty-one already, and has not needed to wait."

"Don't be unhappy," she said, looking at him with earnest, tender eyes, which had never yet met his in anger. "I should be so miserable to think I had made you so. Some one better than I will care for you some day and make you happy."

"I don't think that. I have loved you such a long time. You have always seemed to belong to me, since we were tiny children."

"Yes, as your sister; you can be my brother always."

"You won't need one."

"I shall like one. Do forgive me if I am ungrateful to you. Indeed, I never meant to disappoint you; but I can't, I can't like you best."

"I know that now, though I did not guess it till yesterday. Redfern wins in everything. I never grudged the rest to him, so long as I kept you. But he takes it all. Well, he is the best man, and deserves it."

"He has had *nothing* before," Violet said, flushing.

"No, and I have been always fortunate. It is his turn now. Nobody is to blame. Good-bye, Letty; shake hands now, for I will go to-day, and I can't say good-bye with him to look on. My little Letty! you have always seemed part of me since you

were a tiny thing; it is not easy to give you up now."

He held her hand in his and gazed at her sadly. He had never looked so handsome or so earnest before; the love and sorrow in his eyes were even passionate. Her own filled with tears, and her voice trembled as she answered him:

"Why should you all be too good to me, and care for me so much?" she asked; "I don't deserve it. Go away, and think about me no more."

"I'll go, but I won't forget you. You are the best part of my life; would you have me give that up? He has your future, but I have your past; I shall never lose that. If I don't love in a talkative way, I do in an obstinate one. Don't be angry; I won't tell you again. I do think I love you so much that I could give you up easily if I believed he would make you happier than I

should. He deserves you better, if that were all."

"I am not afraid," she said.

"No, because you are like me, and won't change. Good-bye, Letty; don't think I can ever be sorry to have loved you."

He loosed her hand, and left her. He had very little talk with any one afterwards about his departure. He packed his portmanteau, and went away just as if he were not saying farewell to all old hopes, habits, possessions, and attachments. He walked quietly out of the garden at Monkholme, as if he had never had any chance of owning it all. He had said good-bye to Violet; the rest did not matter.

That made the one saddening incident of Violet's day. She sat by the window quite mournfully after he had gone, wondering when he would return there, as in the old happy days.

Every one seemed to know what had happened; she had told Redfern, and half expected him to blame her in some way, but he said:

"It is a pity! he is a fine fellow; but you can't help being nice, after all—you are the same to everybody."

Alfred had just told his uncle why he went, and Mr. Hilborough, who knew Violet's affection for her cousin, guessed why she looked sad.

"You must not trouble about this, Violet," he said to her; "I am sorry, but it can't be helped. He really was too young to settle anything before, and if you had ever cared for him, Redfern's coming could have made no difference. He has always had the best chance, if he had known how to use it, so no one can be blamed. Some one had to be disappointed, and, after all, it is better that it should be Alfred."

So Alfred departed from Monkholme, and seemed to leave no blank behind him, although he had held a chief place there so long. Those who remained were happy and satisfied; they had enough without him, and easily forgot *his* sorrow in their own joy.

Redfern's long conference with his uncle had chiefly been on the subject of money-matters. He was wholly determined to receive nothing for himself, and he was unwilling to receive much with Violet; though he agreed at last to allow Mr. Hilborough to make a moderate provision for his mother, and so relieve him from burdens at home.

"Of course," he said, "I have no right to interfere about Violet's fortune, but I don't see what we should want a great deal for."

"No," said Mr. Hilborough, "you have not any right at all to demand more sacrifices from her than are necessary; the needful

ones she will be sure to make willingly, but you must be careful not to force your crotchets on her, though you may keep them yourself."

"I know," answered Redfern humbly, "that I had no right to hope for anything from her, or to speak to her at all yet. I am by no means in a position to marry, and she might have done very much better."

"Not in my opinion, nor in her own," said Mr. Hilborough; "I could have wished nothing better than that you should grow up such a man as I could trust her to, and that you should care for each other. It has been one of my greatest desires to leave Monkholme and the land as well as the money, to my own grandchild, yet I should not have thought it right to do it if she had married any one but a Hilborough."

"I wonder you like to trust her to me,"

said Redfern, rather grimly; "I don't know that I am particularly trustable."

"You depreciate yourself too much. Besides, you will have very hard work to make Violet unhappy; I don't think it is in her nature to be so for long."

"At any rate, as I am to have her, I don't see why I should have Monkholme too. That ought to go to Alfred. It seems naturally his."

"Alfred has never been taught to expect it, and he does not expect it," said Mr. Hilborough; "I shall not forget any claim that he had on me. If a thousand or two can help him forward in his profession, he shall have it: but the rest I shall settle as I choose."

And so he persisted in arranging it; when Alfred came of age, a very handsome gift from his uncle placed him in a position to make his own way in the world easily,

and he himself was content to have no more.

Redfern disliked so much the idea of his uncle's wealth ever being his own, that Mr. Hilborough told him he should have none, it should all be Violet's.

"We will wait till you are married—that need not be a long time off," he observed, "then we will arrange it all. I shall be glad to settle it on her when she is your wife."

Even this plan was not a pleasing one to Redfern; he would have preferred to take Violet without so much money attached to her, but he knew that he had no right to object further. He expressed his opinions to her freely, however.

"I shall never agree to live on my wife's money," he said, looking rather fiercely across the pleasant garden, as they stood together in the sunshine there.

Her hands were clasped round his arm, and she looked up at him, smiling.

"Wait till your wife asks you," she answered.

He turned towards her, and the expression of his face slowly changed as he looked into her steadfast, tender eyes.

"Violet," he said, "you are always patient. If anything can make me a good and a happy man, it must be to have you always with me."

"And," she answered softly, "I shall be so happy to be always with you."

"You can't know," he said, in a low tone, "you are mad to think so; only, since you have once been mad, never become sane again, for the world is such a different place to me while you are like this."

"If it is madness to care for you more than anything else in the world," she an-

swered, "only your own wish can ever cure me of it."

"My own wish," he said, as he put his hand on hers, "my own wish! then indeed I am satisfied."

PART III.

A LOST HAPPINESS.

"After that
We seldom doubt that something in the large
Smooth order of creation, though no more
Than haply a man's footstep, has gone wrong."

MRS. E. B. BROWNING.

CHAPTER I.

REDFERN'S HOME.

THE neighbourhood was considerably astonished by the news of Violet's engagement; most of her friends secretly pitied her, and imagined her to be the victim of her grandfather's wishes about the succession to Monkholme; a great deal of sympathy was given to the vanished Alfred—all his good qualities were remembered now that he had disappeared, and, besides, could be no longer considered the exclusive property of Violet.

"He was so handsome," they said to each other, "and gentlemanly too, and he seemed devoted to her. I am sure everybody

thought they were as good as engaged, but this odd young fellow is quite different: he appears to know nobody; he has not nice manners; he never speaks at all; he pays her no attentions, and they say he has the Hilborough temper—he was a dreadful little boy you know. I am sure when we went to play at Monkholme," etc., etc.

"Gerald Hilborough used to say that he pushed her into a pond, and nearly killed her," added another; "he keeps quiet, but he has all that in him yet, you can see; I wonder Mr. Hilborough will let her marry him. Such a nice girl, too!"

"It is Mr. Hilborough who has hurried on the engagement, because this young man is really the next heir."

"But he can leave it all as he likes."

"Yes, only he has such odd fancies about the property."

It was at Wood Bank that this conversa-

tion was carried on between the young ladies. A little niece of theirs who was staying there and heard it, observed placidly, as she tied her doll's bonnet:

"I like Mr. Redfern Hilborough very much; I met him in the lane, and he gave me some sweets and a penny, and he lifted me over the mud because I said I had my new boots on."

Nobody else had anything to remark in Redfern's favour.

At the vicarage the engagement was also discussed.

"What a shame!" was Hubert's comment, "to let her marry a fellow like that. And such a girl, too! It's really shocking."

"He is a very strange young man," said Mary Alworthy; "he is not entertaining, and somehow he never seems to notice any one."

"I think he is very clever, however," observed Lucy gravely.

She spoke to Violet about his supposed cleverness.

"I was always sure there was something remarkable in him," she declared, "and there must be, or *you* would not be going to marry him; but you always pretended that you did not know about it."

"I think very highly of him, of course," said Violet, smiling, "but I don't know that he is a particular genius in anything."

"I suppose he is very deep," speculated Lucy, "and he won't tell what he thinks to many people. I wonder you know what to say to him."

"Much more generally he does not know what to say to me," answered Violet.

"Really?" said Lucy, with interest, "and what do you do then?"

"Then I tell him he is stupid."

"Do you?" inquired Lucy, looking rather horrified; "I thought when people were engaged they said things—oh! quite different things from that."

"Some people may, I dare say; but you see," she could not help adding, with a smile, "Redfern is so very deep that it is not easy to talk to him like other people."

Mrs. James Hilborough sent an invitation to Violet to stay with her for a short time. Redfern was very anxious that she should go, and Mr. Hilborough thought it best for her to do so.

"Just for a few days," he said, "you need not stay longer."

Redfern came again to Monkholme and took her back with him; it was a delightful journey to them both, though Redfern was little accustomed to the care of a young lady and so many boxes.

"You must take lessons in learning how to look after me," observed Violet, as he put her umbrella and shawls and satchels out of the way.

"That's quite necessary," assented Redfern, "but could not you let me down a little more gently? You might, after this,

begin with only five boxes at once, and add another at every journey."

"Five boxes!" said Violet, indignantly, "I have no more than two."

"That may be," replied Redfern, "I never attempted to count them. I merely said to the porters, '*All* the boxes covered with brown holland, and directed in an illegible hand.'"

"It was you who directed them," Violet replied.

"Just so," assented Redfern.

Mrs. Hilborough had made her house look as nice as possible to receive the travellers. It was not a very bright looking place at the best of times; it was in a street, in the middle of a long row, with a row of taller houses shutting out sky and sunlight on the opposite side. She had a comfortable tea ready for them, however, and waited on them with her own hands. She had put on her best dress to welcome Violet, and she treated Redfern with a great deal of attention and

respect; but her manners were more conciliatory than affectionate to her guest—she seemed to suspect her of condescension in coming amongst them. Redfern's little sisters, Rose and Gerty, wore also their best frocks on this occasion, and sat primly side by side on the couch, looking much impressed, but exceedingly satisfied.

Redfern himself was in high spirits, and Violet was inclined to be pleased with everything; she resumed her old friendship with the little girls, and tried to understand and satisfy Mrs. Hilborough; so on the first evening it seemed rather a bright little household into which she had come, although it was a dingy house.

The next day Mrs. Hilborough fell back at once into her old habits; in her morning dress she put off her superior manner. The night before she had treated Redfern as if he were the principal person in the house; in the morning she took no notice of him. Violet was dismayed to find that his breakfast

came in too late for him to eat comfortably, and also surprised to hear that his mother was rather hurt and offended because he left the toast, which was very much burnt; yet he had not made the slightest remark upon it.

"I am sure *I* can't make all the toast in the house," complained Mrs. Hilborough, "and this is always the way if I don't. I might be expected to do everything."

"However," she remarked afterwards, more cheerfully to Violet, "we can have a comfortable breakfast by ourselves, now he is gone. There always seems to be a hurry when men are about."

Violet would have thought breakfast more comfortable with Redfern to talk to across the table, but he himself had not seemed displeased; he went off looking very bright and satisfied, for she had stood in the hall for a minute watching him brush his hat, and he seemed to think the sight of her very good indeed.

Redfern did not come home to the early dinner, but Violet managed to pass the day cheerfully; she wrote letters, and played a little, thinking all the time of Redfern, and choosing the music he liked best, and in the afternoon she went out to walk with the two little girls. There was an older girl, who always seemed busy and out of sight, and two older still, who were away at school as pupil-teachers.

There was also a little deformed boy with a spinal complaint, and a little girl who was the youngest of all. The boy could not walk at all, and lay on the couch all the day. He was rather peevish and complaining, and it was difficult to make friends with him. It appeared to Violet that his mother did not treat him judiciously; she spoilt him, and yet neglected him. Violet managed to please him at last by telling fairy tales, and the little girls sat close about her knees and listened.

But she lived for the evening, when Redfern would come home! She went upstairs as

usual, and dressed herself in her prettiest things in his honour.

Mrs. Hilborough looked rather surprised when she came down, but supposed "girls liked to be fine." Her own theory was that all choice arrangements "did not matter for Redfern," who never demanded to be considered.

Violet was more dismayed than ever to find that the whole family had "a comfortable tea" before Redfern returned; the teapot was put to keep warm for him, and the remnants of toast, with a corner of tea-cake, were deposited on the fender to bake themselves hard till his arrival; a small tray was also brought in with a cup and saucer, a plate, and a cream-jug upon it.

These arrangements looked extremely dismal to Violet, who would have given Redfern the best things in the world if she could, but they all seemed to be a matter of course in his own house. Mrs. Hilborough and the older girl went out to do some necessary things, and the little girls resumed their

play with the dolls; no one seemed particularly to expect Redfern.

Violet did, however; and, when he came in, her face looked its brightest to receive him. He was later than usual, and he looked tired and rather harassed; something had gone wrong in his absence, and he had overwork to do to make it right. He cleared his face when he saw her, and he reached the disconsolate teapot, toast, and cake from the fender, and poured out his tea himself, talking in quite a lively, cheerful manner.

Violet would have liked to do it all for him, but nothing of the sort seemed to be considered necessary, and she did not like to take a prominent place in his own house, and do more than his mother thought needful. She only stood by the mantelpiece and watched him, answering all he said, but not talking a great deal.

He seemed more than contented. The tired expression left his face altogether, he leaned back in his chair and looked at her

as if that did him a great deal of good; the sweet sympathy in her eyes was a reviving influence that he could not have too much of; he comprehended that because she spoke little, she was feeling all the more.

"So you have been telling wicked fairy tales to the children," he said, his eyes on hers still, "corrupting their innocent minds with such nonsense."

"So you intend to domineer over me as well as over the rest of the house; but I don't mean to be docile," she answered, looking back at him from under soft lashes, with a little smile of satisfaction hovering round her mouth.

"She's a naughty, rebellious cousin, isn't she, Rose?" said Redfern, pulling his little sister to him and looking shocked.

"She told a great many tales to Harry," said Rose; "he was cross because he had not been out."

Redfern turned away from Violet with a sudden expression of vexation.

"Has not Harry been out to-day?"

"No; mamma said Jane was too busy to take him."

Redfern said no more; he finished his tea hurriedly and silently, and did not glance again at Violet.

"Are you going out?" she asked, as he got up with an annoyed and preoccupied air.

"Yes," he answered, turning to her for a moment, "fresh air and exercise are the only things Harry can have that do him good, and it is always happening like this. I hope you don't mind. I dare say my mother will be in directly."

"Oh no, I don't mind," said Violet; she half hoped he would ask her to go with him, but he did not.

It was a bright spring evening, though there was a little fire in the room, and Violet saw Redfern go down the street, pushing Harry's little carriage before him; he was talking to the child, who seemed interested and pleased.

She sat down to wait for his return. As

she gazed into the firelight she meditated sadly on the contrast between her own home and Redfern's; at Monkholme she had nothing but pleasant things and agreeable occupations about her, and every one thought of her, considered her comfort, and remembered her wishes; here, for him, it was all so different that her eyes brightened with tears as she thought of it.

Rose was sitting watching her at the other side of the room, and mistook the cause of her sadness. She went up to her and said:

"Ref won't be long away, cousin Letty."

Violet turned and kissed her, then put her head tenderly down on the small shoulder, holding the child close with an arm round her waist.

"Are you very fond of Ref?" she asked.

"Yes, he is always good to me and Gerty, though mamma says he is cross. I hope you will never take him quite away, because there is nobody else so kind."

Redfern came in before long. Violet heard

him speaking in the hall to Harry in a cheery voice; Mrs. Hilborough met him there and carried Harry off to bed. As usual, she discovered a reproach where none was spoken.

"I don't see that Harry needs to go out always," Violet heard her say; "he can get air enough in the house. You ought to know that it can't be done on ironing day."

Redfern came in looking tired and depressed. He just glanced at Violet, and sat down silently. If he could have chosen, he would not have had her there then, for he only wanted to give her the brightness of his character and existence, and he had nothing of the sort to offer at that moment.

"I wonder mother does not come in," he observed rather crossly.

Violet did not speak to him. She sat down on a stool by his feet and looked into the fire for a minute; then she put her hand on his which lay close to her on his knee, and laid her face down on it silently.

The children were whispering in a corner

over their dolls; Violet had forgotten them, and Redfern forgot them too. He did not speak, but he was by no means unconscious of her caress; she was not used to be so demonstrative to him; his feeling of annoyance and weariness seemed to melt away; in a little while she felt his fingers move and close very tightly over hers, then she turned her lips and kissed them, but still she did not speak.

Redfern did not utter a single grateful word, yet he loved her and thanked her for her silent affection more than he ever could have expressed. When the children knocked a chair over, Violet lifted her head, but Redfern held her hand fast, and they both looked into the fire, and not at each other.

"I am afraid you will find it very dull here," Redfern remarked, after a short time.

"No, I shall not, while you are here," said Violet gently.

They said no more till the children began to go through a great packing-up of their doll-things, and to talk eagerly about it. Redfern turned round then and asked if they were not cold, and Violet drew away her hand and looked at them.

"Come and talk to us," she said.

The children came, and Redfern talked solemn nonsense at them in an amusing way; but they took possession of Violet, and she let them examine her ornaments and pull at her hair. To them she was a very fine lady indeed, an object of admiration, from her dainty shoes to the pretty ribbons on her head. They took them off, and were allowed to try them on; afterwards they obtained permission to pull her hair down, and in much glee and excitement drew the hair-pins out and let the soft mass fall about her shoulders till it hung below her waist.

Redfern watched them, and warned them repeatedly:

"Take care now! Gently, or it will all

come off; it does not any of it grow there, really," while Violet shook her head and laughed at him.

When Mrs. Hilborough came in to summon the little girls to bed, she found them dancing in delight round their cousin, while Violet sat with her hair loose about her, and a little heap of hair-pins on her knee. Redfern was leaning back and watching them all complacently.

"What *do* you wear those things on your head for?" he asked, referring to the discarded hair-pins.

"That I may not look ugly," she answered.

"Do you think you look ugly now?" he demanded, looking at her flushed face and bright eyes.

"I dare say—don't I?"

"Very much so indeed," he replied.

"Well, really, children, I am surprised at you," said Mrs. Hilborough's voice from behind; "come away to bed at once, and don't tease your cousin any more."

"They have not teased me, aunt," said Violet, blushing very much, and pushing her hair back hastily.

"You say so, of course, but they are very troublesome. Come, children, say good-night, and don't linger about any more," and she drove them away rather crossly to bed. She thought Violet's manner "peculiar."

That first evening was very like the others that followed, except in the fact that Redfern never wished Violet away again. She could demand a great deal sometimes, but she had the faculty of standing aside and waiting when she knew that it was not the time to give. She did not require incessant attention and admiration from her lover; if he loved her, that was enough. She was willing to give at least as much thought and kindness as she took; when she could not help she strove at all events to be no burden, but to be needed, to be relied upon, was the sweetest part of all affection to her.

Mrs. Hilborough did not take Violet into

her sympathies like a daughter: she spoke often as if she suspected her of despising them all, and being disgusted with the few luxuries they could provide for her; she hinted at the supposed subjects of her guest's thoughts occasionally, and even suggested that she entertained slighting ideas of what Redfern did and provided for her comfort. That vexed Violet the most, because she could not defend herself to Redfern without seeming to disagree with his mother; so what he thought of it she never knew.

It was always curious to him to notice how truthfully Violet conveyed her ideas of persons to themselves through the most deceptive manners; she rarely, with all her habitual courtesy and kindness, made any one fancy she liked him when she did not; her extreme politeness had chilled Gerald, and now the gentleness of her manners to Mrs. Hilborough did not betray her aunt into any feeling of close sympathy.

Violet was truly anxious to like Redfern's

mother, and to be liked by her; there was accordingly something particularly gentle and attentive in her behaviour to her, yet the want of attraction that she experienced towards her aunt made itself felt in an indefinite way, and Mrs. Hilborough knew, though she could not have expressed the idea, that Violet only liked her by the force of her will, and not with the heart.

With the children it was different; they took Violet readily into their closest affections, and while their mother was a little afraid of her, and thought her proud, they were soon on the most boldly-familiar terms. They teased her, played with her, coaxed and caressed her, and seemed as fond of her as they could be; only, Violet was pleased to find, whenever there was the chance of a distinction, they fell back on Redfern and liked him best.

If she could have chosen, she would have been second to him all her life and in everything. She would not only have wished him

to be more loved, but also more worthy of love, and that was an extreme of self-repression.

Redfern took her home at the end of the week, and passed the Sunday at Monkholme. Violet enjoyed the quiet there with him more than ever after her experience of his small, crowded, uncomfortable, inharmonious home. The flowers looked very much brighter than before she went away, and the birds sang much more sweetly; every breath of air, pervaded with the smell of blossoms, and crisp with the freshness of hills and fields, was delicious to her; she thought of the time when she, with the gift of her love, would bring the dower of all these pleasant things to Redfern, and remove every moment of his existence into a brighter atmosphere.

"It is worse going back this time than ever," said Redfern before they parted, and it was unusual for him to utter a regret; "the house will look dreary without you."

"Yet," answered Violet, flushing a little, "I was not always sure that you were glad to have me there."

"Then you were most foolish," he said quietly.

When he had gone, she stood leaning on the gate, and looking down the lane after him. She was musing on the future with tender, dreamy eyes; there was no satisfied vanity in her heart, nor much remembrance of herself at all.

"I shall be glad that my own life has always been so bright and pleasant," she thought, "if God will only let me make his happier."

CHAPTER II.

DELAY.

Redfern and Violet were not married at once, as Mr. Hilborough had thought probable. Every one concerned wished for the marriage to take place soon, yet it was again and again delayed. Redfern desired earnestly to come to an end of the repeated partings and long separations from Violet. While he was engaged to her he led a kind of double existence, and sometimes could hardly believe that his two lives belonged to one and the same person. Away from her he sank back often into the bitter despondency of old days; he was never faithless, he believed always in good and great things; it

was his clear sight of them, combined with a feeling of distance and estrangement, that made him occasionally hard and impatient. He believed in them, but he saw no relation or connection between them and himself, and in himself he believed not at all—which was his great mistake.

Violet, too, was willing to be married without delay; she was sure to wish anything that Redfern wished, and she had no greater desire, and knew no more complete satisfaction, than to be with him. It was not always happiness, or even pleasure, but it was the perpetual choice of her mind, never changed in his absence or regretted in his presence. *She* also wished the separations to end; with them she believed would end the slight estrangements which she sometimes felt, though they were not spoken. When he had her with him always he would believe in her completely, such as she was, and trust her entirely and continually.

Her engagement was not a period of per-

petual sunshine ; there were times when she felt that they had drifted a little apart again, that some undefinable thing had come between them. Occasionally Redfern seemed to misunderstand her, and sometimes she seemed to have lost her way through his mind, to be unable to reach his thoughts, and be received into the sympathy which very often she thought perfect. This never lasted long ; the cloud was only in Redfern's mind, and was sure to clear away ; afterwards he always blamed himself and not her. Still she would sometimes sit disappointed with a letter in her hand, and read it over and think it over, trying to find what there was in the tone of it that made it seem written from another world, and not spoken, as many of his simple undemonstrative letters were, straight from Redfern's heart to hers ; and it would seem to her hard to be away from him, and so to be unable to make all things clear by her trust and affection ; for explanations of motives

and feelings are generally useless. She could only leave the truth to speak for her, and sometimes the truth did not seem to speak plainly, or Redfern could not hear it.

With her Redfern was generally happy and satisfied; she received him so naturally into her own bright existence, that he seemed to belong to it, and had no alien feeling there; then his own past moods would appear incomprehensible to him, and wholly unreasonable, and he had not a doubt of the present or the future. When he had gone home again, however, all would change again; it was not his life there that depressed him so much, but his own state of mind in it. He felt dull, isolated, and embittered. He did not trust himself: he always seemed to do and to be wrong; he did not hope, and did not wish to hope; he felt an alien creature, with a repulsion rather than a sympathy for the things he thought best; he had nothing in common with the pleasant people of life, and with the obstinacy

and pride inherent in his nature, he wished to remain apart from them all. He perceived, or fancied he perceived, his own isolation and difference from others, and he made a choice of it in his hopelessness and independence, just as he had done in his boyhood.

In these moods he could hardly imagine himself as he was at Monkholme with Violet, happy, careless, and sympathetic. Those experiences seemed merely a delusion; he had no affinity to the world there; he even persuaded himself at times that Violet had made a cruel mistake, and had better have been left free. When a letter from her came to him and he was in such a state of mind, it never seemed to be written to himself; it scarcely touched him or made itself understood; it was like a voice heard from the shore a long way off, when the tide is drifting us away to sea. He would send an answer with that jarring tone in it that hurt Violet, though she hardly knew why—it

was as if she struck a note that she knew well, and it gave her back a harsh sound, making her shiver at the discord. Then she always waited and believed, and the tune came right again. When Redfern trusted her, he did it unreservedly and generously, but that was not always.

Yet it was Redfern himself who put the chief difficulties in the way of the marriage. Mr. Hilborough wished it to take place at once, and expected Redfern to come and live at Monkholme.

It was contrary to all Redfern's instincts to give up his independence in that way, and be indebted for everything he had to his uncle or his wife. Violet understood that, and never wished for such a sacrifice from him. She knew that he never could have been happy to have drifted through life objectless and irresponsible, and she would not have been content to see him so. Redfern's own idea was that he should keep his present situation, that she should marry him

and go to him in the great town where he lived; he would not have refused to let her accept something from her grandfather which would make it unnecessary for her to endure many privations in her new life; in the meantime, he would be earning at least his own living, and could study his favourite art in the leisure hours which he had before given up to extra copying. There were opportunities for study in the great town where he lived, and he thought that to begin with they could live very well on three or four hundred a year; he himself received two hundred.

"When I can really paint pictures and sell them, I will willingly come and live at Monkholme," he said to Violet; "those days are too good to think of."

"You can study landscape at Monkholme," said Mr. Hilborough, "and you like that best."

"Meanwhile, how am I to support myself?" asked Redfern.

"You would live here," answered Mr. Hilborough.

"Just so. I should live in your house, eat at your table, use your servants, and you would doubtless allow me so much a quarter for my clothes and personal expenses. Imagine what a life that would be. I would sooner be a vegetable or a mollusk, than such a man with a conscious will and an individual mind."

Mr. Hilborough suggested that there was much for him to do in looking after the estate; that many owners of land spent their lives usefully and profitably in that way, and were little more than stewards of their own possessions. If he liked to do so, well and good; it would be all the better for those who came after him at Monkholme.

"That would be all very well for some persons," said Redfern, "but not for me. That sort of work does not suit me, and I don't understand it. Besides, I should hate to live on the work of past generations; I want

to earn my own living and make my own place. The amassing principle is hateful to me; why should one man work day and night that another may not work at all? I should like to take just what I can get myself, and of that only what I need. This accumulation of good things seems contrary to nature. If our grandfathers tried to save up food for us, it would go bad, or clothes—they would rot; it is only by a contract with their own generation that they obtain a claim on the next. We were not told to ask for bread in the cupboard that would last two centuries; and there always seemed to me a meaning in the manna: it went bad if it was kept two days; it mayn't do so for other men, but it does yet for me."

"But, my dear boy, these are wild socialistic theories," objected Mr. Hilborough, very gravely. "Perhaps you are impatient, and hardly mean all you say."

"I mean it for no one but myself. Probably there is right in property arrangements

somewhere; it would certainly seem wrong to upset them; but I don't comprehend the right myself, and would rather not meddle in it. I feel with Emerson, that what I can get myself with conscious effort is alone good for me; what any one else gives can be neither help nor nourishment. Let Violet have as much as you and she like, but I want to work for my own needs; I don't see very far into life, and I should certainly like to stand on my own feet and make my own way, instead of going on blindfold where any one chooses to take me."

Redfern, it appeared, could speak strongly and distinctly when he felt it necessary, and could hold to his purpose through many temptations and obstacles.

Violet might not agree with his reasoning, but she thought his conclusion was right. If she could have pleased herself, she would gladly have left her beautiful, prosperous home and gone to share his poverty in the smoky town. Much as she loved fresh air,

lovely views, trees, and flowers, with all the pleasures of youth and affluence, she felt the need of him more strongly than all other needs. She wanted to be sure, quite sure of him. She was aware that there was a part of his nature altogether unlike her own, that she never reached it, and could hardly understand it; she was sometimes afraid of it, because it came between her and the rest of him. She wanted the absolute right to forgive him, whatever he might be or do; she had yet only a limited right; and the most dangerous part of his unsympathetic moods was, that in them he was often inclined to reject forgiveness, and tried with obstinate infatuation to put it out of his reach. He persuaded himself he was unworthy of it, but his self-contempt was not always humility, and did not help him to be conciliating. He marred his love as he marred his life, by a too great consciousness of the defects in it. Another provoking thing was that he always persisted in seeing in any misunderstanding

or dispute, not a cause of anger or a need for pardon, so much as a barrier between himself and Violet. For a time he would regard such things as demonstrations of their want of suitability to each other rather than excuses for vexation ; and the proof of a fact is always harder to deal with than a simple reason for it.

So Violet, though she did not complain, and ignored his curious fancies as much as she could, longed very much to have the right to love and be patient with him, placed above all other rights in the world. Probably she would never have regretted it if she could have become his wife without delay, and gone to share some dingy little house in the great town with him. She loved pleasant sights and sensations, but persons were very much more to her than things ; she was unceasingly conscious of the influence of those around her on her life and happiness, and she easily forgot the circumstances or scenes in which she was placed.

She did not think it right, however, to leave her grandfather, and Mr. Hilborough would never have consented to part with her; he also thought Redfern's idea of taking her to a town life quite untenable; he could not have endured to let her go into such an uncongenial atmosphere of strangeness and privations. A small house, insufficient servants, little money, many neighbours, and few friends; no garden, carriage, or pleasant occupations — such surroundings seemed absurd in connection with Violet. He had always spoilt her, and given her agreeable things in abundance, which had perhaps made her forget the value of them.

"However," she commented to Redfern, when no wedding-day could be definitely fixed; "you will have to work and I shall have to wait; that is all; I suppose it is the ordinary routine of things."

CHAPTER III.

WINTER AND DEATH.

The months went on, changing the colours of the trees; these deepened slowly first, then flushed into gorgeous, dying colours, faded and fell. The last rose flowered and withered; the birds of summer sang their latest song, and the first fall of snow came and shed a soft white silence on the earth.

Alfred had come no more to Monkholme; his twenty-first birthday, which he had never thought of spending anywhere else, was not passed there; very little communication, even by letter, was held with him. He had gone quite out of the lives of those who were

dearest to him, and was merely expected to form new ties and interests elsewhere.

Redfern had come and gone often. He went on steadily with his double work at home, and led a very hard life in the intervals of his visits; but good fortune came to him before he expected it; he not only sold a few studies that he had done at the time, but he also obtained an engagement to sketch for a magazine on very satisfactory terms. He was undoubtedly clever in his own art, and some of his fancies were very curious and original; they obtained for him the regular work that he was so anxious to have.

There was no longer any difficulty in the way of his marriage; he was willing to resign his situation at once and go to live at Monkholme. Violet was very happy when she heard it; she was proud of the talents which had gained him a measure of success so early; she was pleased that he

had so soon proved right in his desire for independence, and that he could have his own wish for earning his livelihood fulfilled, while he satisfied Mr. Hilborough's desire by living at Monkholme.

Redfern went over in the highest spirits to arrange about the wedding; it was winter then, and it was decided that February or March would not be too soon for it. The only drawback to everybody's satisfaction, was that Mr. Hilborough, who had always been strong and healthy before, had not been very well for the last few weeks. When Redfern went to Monkholme again to fix the time for the wedding more definitely, he found that Mr. Hilborough was worse, and Violet serious and anxious.

"We cannot talk any more about being married just yet," she said, "until grandpapa is better."

So the question was adjourned for a week or two, until Mr. Hilborough should be strong again; it could be settled immediately

then, and the wedding could take place at once, every one thought.

But it soon became evident that Mr. Hilborough never would be strong again. Violet could not disturb his last days with the talk of any change; and she came to see that death and sorrow were between her and the final crown and assurance of her love.

She never lamented; such a sorrow was too solemn to cavil at; she told her belief simply to Redfern, and there was no need to say more about it.

Mr. Hilborough knew that he was dying; he would have wished to rally a little and be able to witness the marriage of Violet and Redfern, but that was not granted to him. He, too, accepted the position, with its great disappointments, simply and silently. There was something calm and grand in his nature, as in that of many of the Hilboroughs; death was only a great fact to him, and no terror, nor—being so absolute a necessity—much cause for regret.

Violet had never been very near sickness and death since her childhood, but she nursed her grandfather through his illness, with a stillness of heart and patience of mood, that was given by the awful consciousness of an overshadowing presence, that was greater than all her love and her will.

In that time she trusted completely in Redfern's tenderness; and it never failed her. He came to her with no thought of himself, not even of his own deficiencies, and that was a great advance in unselfishness. He had no fits of perverseness or abstraction, he was full of concern and sympathy for her; he was never mournful or dissatisfied; his love was only at that period a consolation and strength to her. His coming was the greatest help she had; she thought of it and waited for it with the patience of complete assurance. She had no anxiety in her affection; she knew he would be completely kind to her and that his presence would make her stronger. She

used to meet him with the steady light in her eyes of full quiet feeling; she had no need to watch him as before and study his state of mind eagerly.

They did not talk much at those meetings; at first there was that long silent look of recognition which spoke the completeness of love, being the simple expression of "It is you," which means everything without further thought; then they would go into the dining-room, and stand quietly there by the fire for a few moments before Redfern went up to see his uncle; there would only be a few brief questions and answers, but Violet felt as if she had a shelter and could not be afraid any more, and both of them understood more clearly, in the changes and uncertainties of other things, how real their own love was, and how closely, in spite of outward differences, they were bound together in their hearts.

Mr. Hilborough comprehended that his days would be very few. He had made no

new will for many years; the last had been drawn up in Violet's childhood; he had afterwards decided that another would be necessary, but he had waited to understand how the young people were likely to act and to settle before making final arrangements about his property. When Redfern became engaged to Violet he had expected the marriage to take place at once, and had never feared the chance of his dying before then; he had wished to wait till Violet was Redfern's wife and then to make final settlements on herself and her heirs. This had of course not been done; but he was so satisfied in the knowledge of the betrothal and attachment of these two, that he felt no anxiety about his granddaughter's future. It was certain whom she would marry, therefore conditional provisions did not matter at all; they might or might not exist without making any difference.

So, instead of sending for a lawyer to draw up a new will hastily, he only sent for

a trusted and long-tried friend, whom he had appointed principal executor and Violet's guardian. This gentleman was a Scotchman, and Violet had rarely seen him before.

Mr. Hilborough had always been of a reticent nature, and possessed few intimate friends, but Mr. Donaldson had been a companion of his early days, and, though the two men lived far apart and had seldom met in later life, the friendship between them had never been destroyed.

Mr. Donaldson was an old bachelor; he lived in Scotland with a maiden sister who kept house for him. Violet had always felt a liking for him, for he was kind to her in his own way, but he treated her with some reserve and bashfulness, for he was an awkward, unpolished man, not knowing how to express the kindly sentiments he felt; he was thoroughly straightforward and honourable; he was trustworthy in every sense, but not the sort of man to easily win the intimate friendship of a young lady.

Violet was quite satisfied, however, to know that he was to have the charge of her affairs after her grandfather's death. There was indeed no one else who could have understood them. Those of Mr. Hilborough's brothers who still survived were engrossed by occupations and the cares of large families.

It also seemed better to Mr. Hilborough to arrange that Violet's chief protector should be one who had no interest in the family affairs, and who could not possibly, therefore, be in danger of influencing her actions in a prejudiced spirit.

Mr. Donaldson came over from Scotland to see Mr. Hilborough before he died. He was a curious man to have the future charge of Violet; or he looked so as she met him in the hall. She came forward in a dress of some soft dark material, moving with a quiet step; Mr. Donaldson, on the other hand, had a heavy tread, angular movements, and a loud voice with a strong northern accent. It was by no means an unpleasant voice, and

he shook her hand heartily with his great fingers; the expression of his face was very friendly too, though his features were hard and angular. He was very big, and looked bigger when he walked about, because he had no grace in his movements.

Violet and he understood one another however; their eyes met with a look of mutual esteem and trust, though they had no word of friendship for each other, and Mr. Donaldson could think of nothing to observe but that it was a raw night.

Violet had a happy way of not expecting persons to be like herself, but only to be fully and simply themselves, just as nature had made them, and this made it possible for her to have the sympathy and liking of most incongruous characters. She expected, therefore, no condolence or consolation from her future guardian; he had come to do business for her; she knew he would do it faithfully, and there was no need to talk about it.

She left him with her grandfather, and went downstairs to sit alone, quite content to leave her destiny in other hands. She had a general idea of how the money and estate would be left, but had no curiosity about particulars.

Redfern too was contented to know little about the arrangements concerning Violet's fortune; he might have been told more, but he was not anxious to listen; and he was very glad that the whole charge of a business so obnoxious to him was in Mr. Donaldson's hands and not his.

Mr. Hilborough had sent for Mr. Donaldson to explain more fully his wishes for Violet's future, or rather for the brief period of it that would elapse before her marriage; and also to explain the motives of his will, and make it more comprehensible.

On his son's marriage he had destroyed his old will, and since that he had made three new ones, all of which were still existing, and these he showed to Mr. Donaldson.

The first had been drawn up immediately after his son's death. In it he had left simply all his fortune in money to Violet, and the estate to the next heir after his brother James—his nephew—Redfern Hilborough.

The next will he had written after Violet had come to live at Monkholme, and when the project of marrying her to one of her half-cousins — probably Redfern — had occurred to him.

In that will he left the whole of his property, money and land to be held in trust for Violet till her marriage or death; she was to enjoy all the interest of it, except three hundred a year, which was settled as an annuity upon her mother.

In case of her marriage with one of the family of Hilborough, bearing its name, she was to receive the whole property as absolutely hers; the annuity to her mother only was to be continued, and a thousand pounds were to be given on her wedding-day to each of her sisters.

On her marriage to any one who was not a Hilborough she was to receive all the fortune in money — amounting to fifteen thousand—and the estate was to revert at once to Redfern Hilborough.

The third will had been drawn up after the momentous visit of the three boys to Monkholme thirteen years before; but had never been properly signed and attested.

In this last will the money and estate were left in trust for Violet until she came of age; always excepting the annuity for her mother.

On the day of her marriage to a Hilborough, provided that day was on or before her twenty-first birthday, she was to receive the money and estate as hers absolutely, as in the former will, the annuity being continued to her mother, and a thousand pounds given to each of her sisters.

On her coming of age, if she had not already married a Hilborough, or did not marry one that day, the estate was to revert

at once to Ralph Hilborough, Mr. Hilborough's youngest brother, the money was to remain hers; but she was merely to enjoy the interest of it, until she made such a marriage as her guardian approved of, and then it became absolutely her own. Under these circumstances, the annuity was to be continued to her mother, but there were no legacies for her sisters.

Violet's half-brother was not mentioned in any of these wills; he was a wild and extravagant young man, and it was partly on account of his dissipated character that Mr. Hilborough never liked his granddaughter to remain long in her mother's house.

The last will seemed rather an arbitrary one to Mr. Donaldson, but Mr. Hilborough explained the motives that had induced him to write it.

When the second will was drawn up he had thought it highly probable that one of the three cousins would prove a suitable

husband for Violet; if, however, she disliked them all, the estate could go to the natural heir, Redfern Hilborough, and she would still be well provided for.

After the visit of the children to Monkholme it seemed to Mr. Hilborough most unlikely that she could choose any of the three except Alfred; Redfern was hopelessly naughty and disagreeable, of a violent and obstinate temper; and Gerald had a mean and cowardly disposition, and was not likely to prove a man to be respected or loved.

The same reasons which led him to suppose that Violet would never marry either of the two, made him decide not to leave the estate to either of them under any circumstances. He thought it very probable that Violet would remain attached to Alfred and would marry him, in which case he should wish the property to remain all hers. If, on the contrary, she rejected Alfred, it would no doubt be through his own misconduct;

he would at any rate have had a fair chance of winning Violet and Monkholme together. If he failed Mr. Hilborough determined that the estate should go to none of his nephews, but to his own brother, the one most likely to survive him—Ralph, the youngest, who lived at that time in Canada, and had two little boys who were babies, and would never enjoy a chance of marrying Violet.

He also explained that he left no legacies to Violet's sisters if she had the money only, because to provide for her separately required a larger fortune, and he did not wish to diminish it in any way. If she had the estate also, she would not need so much, and the legacies could be spared.

He did not leave the fortune absolutely to her till her marriage, because he was afraid that until then she might be largely under the influence of her home people, and he was afraid of her brother abusing her generosity, before she had a protector to counteract his designs.

The condition which required her to be married before her coming of age had seemed wise to him for various causes. If he lived till she was twenty-one he would of course be able to make other arrangements; if not, she would be left to influences he much disliked, and he would wish her to marry young. It also seemed to him that if she did not then care for Alfred enough to marry him she never could do so; and he did not wish to leave his property for long in an unsettled state. He could not hope to keep Violet entirely safe from home influences after his death; he was afraid that these might be used to induce her to remain unmarried and to leave her fortune in unsafe hands; by this condition as to her age, and the effect it would have on her sisters' legacies, he made it an interest for her own family to see her married safely, while she was still young, to the husband he would have chosen for her. He contemplated the prospect of Violet living at Monkholme in the care of Alfred

with much more satisfaction than that of Violet living in her mother's house.

However, all his views and plans had been altered since the will was drawn up. He had long intended to write another, but had waited to understand how Violet's future would be decided. Since her engagement to Redfern he had put off all alterations until her marriage, which could not now take place till after his death.

"However," he said, "this last will cannot stand. It was made under other circumstances, and if its conditions are still unfulfilled it is only my health which keeps them so. A month ago I never thought they would not be carried out, and this will would then have done as well as any other; it only wanted signing. I shall burn it to-night. As the delay in Violet's marriage has made me leave my affairs a little less clearly settled than I had intended to do, I wanted you to understand all my past intentions, which really have nothing to do with the present

or future, though they seem to intrude there. I also wanted you to be present when I burnt this will, and to understand that the second of the three is definitely the last. As it turns out, it will do as well as anything else; for Violet will be married to Redfern as soon as is reasonable."

"Can you trust the young man entirely?" asked Mr. Donaldson. "This second will makes the estate more his own if she marries a stranger than if she marries him."

"She won't marry a stranger; and in any case Redfern Hilborough would be more likely to reject the fortune than to seize it."

"It is a pity they are not married," observed Mr. Donaldson.

"It is a great pity; but it is a very satisfactory thing to know that they will be."

"Then you leave Miss Hilborough engaged to him without any doubts? He is a young man in whom you have much confidence?"

"I have a great esteem for him, and I

know he is much attached to Violet. He is of an odd temper, but his principles are good. He reminds me very much of what my son was at his age; only Redfern has more self-control than Edgar ever had. Besides, Edgar was not fortunate in his first engagement, and that made a great difference in his life. With a woman like Violet to care for him, Redfern has every chance in his favour."

"She *does* care for him, I suppose?"

"Certainly. It was by their own desire that they became engaged to each other; I never expressed any wish."

"I knew nothing about it, but it had always appeared to me that the other nephew was to be the one."

"Alfred? That seemed most probable once. The boy was disappointed, but he is young enough to get over it. He was always steady and honourable; I never had any fault to find with him, and he was very fond of Violet; but I should not have left

her to him with half so much satisfaction as I leave her to Redfern. I don't know how it is, Redfern is certainly not better than he was, and his temperament is much more uncertain. But it is so. Alfred was rather too easy-going and indifferent."

"The sort of young man to make his wife happy, I should think," observed Mr. Donaldson.

"Perhaps so. I don't know. Redfern will suit Violet better," Mr. Hilborough concluded.

The first will and the third were burnt that evening; Mr. Donaldson watched their destruction, and saw the second will restored to a place of safety.

"This will imposes no difficult conditions," said Mr. Hilborough; "but I should very much like Violet to be married as soon as possible after my death. She will go to her mother for a short time doubtless, but I wish her to come to you after a month or two, and to be married from your house. I don't

like to think of her at home; she is never very happy there."

"She will have a quiet life with us."

"She need not stay long, and your sister will be kind to her. To have her settled again at Monkholme, with Redfern to take care of her, is what I most desire. His nature is tender and faithful, I know, and he will be very good to her when they are once married."

"Is he not good to her now?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Hilborough with grave coldness; "but he will have more right to be so then."

Mr. Donaldson went back to Scotland; he returned to Monkholme for the funeral, but he never saw Mr. Hilborough alive again.

Violet's mother wrote to her, offering to come and help her to nurse her grandfather, but Mr. Hilborough dreaded her appearance, and encouraged delays in her coming, though he was anxious for Violet to have some help and comfort.

Redfern would have wished to be there always, and he was the best help that Violet or Mr. Hilborough could have. They took all assistance willingly from him, and he gave it quietly and successfully. Up to that time there had been a large amount of unconscious generosity in Violet's love for Redfern; afterwards there was a great deal of gratitude in it. Before then she had longed passionately to help and comfort him; now she rested with the abandonment of lonely tenderness on his help and comfort.

Redfern could not always be at Monkholme, and it chanced that Violet was alone when the end came. Mr. Donaldson had gone back; her mother had not arrived, and Redfern was away.

The snow was on the ground, muffling all the sounds outside; it spread like a white sheet over the lawn, unbroken by any footmarks. It was piled on the neglected terrace-steps, and the trees were heavy with their laden branches. The robin alone had

courage to sing while all the earth was so white and still; the deep cart-ruts in the lane were filled up, and all the ground looked smooth and unbroken; the hedges were thickly covered, and the hills rose white and calm, with their black rocks hidden, above the quiet valley. The red low sun looked through the frosty air, across the half-frozen brook with its icy sides; the water was dark between the crisp bright edges, and the tinkle of its flowing was faint and small. The black evergreens swept the snowy lawn with heavily-laden branches; the white pigeons on the roof were only like moving masses of drift.

What a quiet, rayless sun it looked, sinking slowly through the gray air, which was not half so white and pure as the earth below it. It shone through the windows with no startling glow. Violet sat there with her grandfather alone. All the earth seemed wrapped in silence and soft whiteness; a blank had been drawn over all the colours

and brightness of it, and now there was only a hushed stillness. That still silence seemed creeping over her life too; there was nothing but calm in it, and a wiping out of old things.

Her hand was in her grandfather's; she waited quietly for the end; the end to him, beyond which she looked blankly and could at present think of nothing. Doubtless the still silence and calm would go, and a spring would come with birds and flowers; but that was in the future, and in the present was only a falling asleep; a coming of death like the soft, blinding snow, which makes no sound and blots out the world with its brightness and blackness.

"I have loved you very much," Mr. Hilborough had said to her a little while before; "I think it has been some good to you, Violet."

"The best thing you have done for me," she answered with soft earnestness.

"I loved your father too. There must be

some end in all love, though we cannot see it. I trust so. God will not let so good a thing be thrown away."

"No," said Violet, in a low, full voice, "for God loves too."

"Yes," said Mr. Hilborough, looking at her with an earnest gaze that tried to read her future in her face, "and you love Redfern; you have no one else; but that can never be thrown away."

"It never will," answered Violet earnestly; "do not think of us now. We are not afraid."

"I don't think of you," he replied dreamily. "I have loved you—I can do no more: some other love must come. I think of him instead—of your father. He had a look like yours when he was a boy. That is years ago now. It is years since he died. But no love can be really lost."

"No," answered Violet; "and he used to tell me that if we fail to love our dearest as we would, God will love them instead for us, and they shall lose nothing in the end."

"Did he say so? Yes, I will believe it, and for you, Violet, it will be good to remember it always."

"I always remember it," answered Violet softly.

Mr. Hilborough said little more; his thoughts wandered away to the years before, when his son had been a boy and had loved him; they came back at intervals with an effort to the present. It appeared to trouble him a little to leave Violet, though he had already travelled far out of her life; he would say uneasily, "You have Redfern; you love each other," and then ramble away again to the old days before they either of them existed.

He died quietly, and Violet sat still looking before her at the silent world.

This was the second life that she had seen go and leave a blank in her own. She had never been taught to look upon death as a terror, but only a loss, and she who had the loss almost envied the peace of going. It

seemed to her no horror then, but only a good thing to have done with an uncertain life and to be at rest. No longing any more, no tears any more, no voices any more—such a silence after the noise of existence; it was surely good to give back life to the God who gave it, and to have no struggles afterwards.

How calm and still was the thought of those who had left her; she looked after them into the silent life whence no one spoke to her, with a vague yearning. This loss was not a sorrow but a silence; and the silence called her like a voice. She seemed to have reached a quiet place above the struggles and interests of the world; she felt reluctant to go back again.

She thought of her love for Redfern, which had become the most intense part of her own existence. What was it at the best? A passionate longing in his absence, a watchful tenderness in his presence, which made her life too keenly felt to be tranquil; an

intense pleasure at intervals and sometimes a sickening disappointment in which she refused to believe; all the sensations of it were unreasonable and founded upon trifles; through them all there was the strong unsatisfied desire to be always pleasing him and making him happier. Her feelings were too strong for her own tranquillity; her heart ached with the sweetness, or throbbed with the disappointment of life. Surely it was good to leave the task of loving to some one who could do it better than she could; she only hurt herself and helped no one with her too passionate affection. She had not a nature strong enough to bear it; would it not be well to leave all these tumultuous interests behind her? would it not be sweet to come to the end of them all, and in this silence and calm to go on to the peace and the quietness of a finished life.

There was a stillness now, even in her own heart. She had followed those she loved a little way into the calm and silence

of death; she did not care for anything greatly just then; it seemed to her that she did not even care for Redfern very much: she fancied if he came to her at that time she could look at him with a newly-won freedom and say, "I have gone away from you now; I don't belong to you quite so much; you cannot hurt me as you once could."

She shed no tears for her grandfather; in such a mood as this she felt no cause to weep; the servants wondered a little at her great calmness; she seemed even to be happy. She moved about the house and gave instructions in a quiet way, as if she felt peculiarly safe from evil, and secure from all vexation. The familiar rooms and garden seemed stranger to her than the loss she had just endured; she could hardly understand the place without her grandfather to own it. Until she had done all she could think of that should be done, there came no moment of reaction; but when every direc-

tion was given, every message sent, when she went and stood alone in the dining-room, knowing that there was no one to disturb her, no one to open the door and come in to her, then she felt a thrill of loneliness; there was still her life left to be filled with love, and her eager heart to be satisfied; they had not gone with the dead into the silence of death.

There was only Redfern. Was he enough? He had never been her all before; hitherto she had always had another affection in which she rested with untroubled trust; outside his love there had never been for her complete loneliness, as there was now. She had sent Alfred away, and her grandfather was gone; there was nothing left but Redfern. From that moment she only waited, with intense feelings kept back in her heart till he should come.

He was the first to reach her. A mother's love should be the strongest, but this mother's love was divided very unequally,

and Violet had no rival in Redfern's heart.

She met him in the hall; her step was quiet and her manner calm, but the expression of her face was expectant and earnest, and her eyes sought his as if they asked for something, he knew not what.

Her thoughts had gone out beyond that moment into the altered future, and she was seeking an answer to the wonder if he could be sufficient for it all, and if he would be.

"It is over then," he said quietly, looking into her face.

"Yes," she answered in a soft steady voice, with her eyes fixed on his, "and I am alone."

"No," answered Redfern gently, "I think not."

Her eyes grew a little brighter and her lips trembled: then when she felt his touch, and he drew her to him silently, she shivered, and woke up with a sob from the calmness in which she had wrapped herself;

she put her head down on his shoulder and wept tears that were sweet and not sorrowful; for with Redfern's presence she came back to her old life, with its sweet nearness of human love, the tenderness of its sympathy, and the courage of its happy trust.

When she lifted her face again there was not that look in it which had seemed to seek something a long way off; her eyes rested with contentment on his; yet there was an appeal to him in her voice.

"I have only you now," she said; "you must love me very much."

"If that were all," answered Redfern, in the soft deep tones he used when moved by strong feeling, "it would be very easy."

CHAPTER IV.

VIOLET'S FRIENDS.

Mr. Hilborough was buried in the churchyard near his own home. It was a cheerful place; there were no yew trees there, but a few spreading beeches and tall elms; the clear strong river flowed half way round it, and beyond the river the quiet meadows stretched away to the foot of the hills.

Mr. Donaldson came over to the funeral; also Mrs. Hilborough arrived to be with her daughter.

Violet's nature was simple and true; she was one of those women with clear eyes and a straightforward gaze, who are capable of making a friendship by a look, and of re-

taining it through years of silence and of absence; she could read the nature of those who suited her, and speak her own in return, by that simple gaze of hers which was at once so candid and so kind; and having thus recognized and spoken to a kindred mind, she could be faithful in her belief, and true to her interest in it, though none but the most commonplace words had been spoken between them.

Having discovered such a friend, she regarded the fact merely as a discovery, and did not try to turn it to advantage by rushing into intimacy and exchanging experiences. She looked on such recognitions of earnest and generous natures as events that must happen continually; these momentary glimpses of sympathy and trust were helpful, but having had them she was content to pass on her way, asking nothing unless she needed it, and not indulging in much emotion for the mere luxury of feeling.

For this reason she had many firm friends

to whom she had never said much more than "How do you do?" and there were many persons about the world who had had little intercourse with Violet Hilborough, and soon lost sight of her in the crowds of life, who yet remembered her always with the trust and satisfaction that the thought of a friend can give.

This faculty served her more with men than with women, who are slower to believe that a feeling is a fact until it has received the chrism of words; and there was one point in her character by which she lost many friends — or was saved from them. Her sympathy was always ready, but she did not easily give her confidence. This was less from the pride of reserve than from the idea that none but her most intimate friends would care to hear much about herself. She did not cultivate her affections as an accomplishment or an excitement, and she was not capable of erecting that full expression of feeling, those sacred utterances of heart

secrets which are the proofs and consequences of friendship, into the artificial pedestal on which a friendship might stand. She kept her tenderness and faith always in her heart, and gave them simply when the need came, just as she retained them simply when they were not needed; but she did not think of showing them in the windows of her life as specimens of the ware to be found within. As a consequence of this, there were some young ladies who thought her cold and reserved in spite of her bright kindly ways; they were disappointed when she gave them no gush of confidences after their own gush was ended; of course it would not be so interesting to hear about her as to talk about themselves, but these things were always done in turns, and it was safer to have an exchange of secrets.

This habit of reticence kept Violet somewhat apart from her mother. Mrs. Hilborough had a maternal affection for her daughter, a habit of interest in all that

happened to her, an instinctive desire to go to her when she was in trouble, and to nurse her when she was ill, but she had never felt for her any close sympathy, and was never comprehended in the strong influences that moved Violet's inner life—she did not wish to be. So she came over to Monkholme, just to take care of Violet as she had done when Violet was a child. Her manner was naturally a little hard though kind, and it was natural that she should not feel inclined to melt on this occasion. She had never been to Monkholme before, it had been her daughter's home, and yet closed to her. Violet had been taken from her in childhood and nourished in affluence, while her other children endured disappointments and privations; it was not natural that she should feel much for the sentimental sorrows of Violet, who had only lost an old grandfather, and who had a fine fortune and estate to console her, and was also to be married in a few months to the man she had herself

chosen. It was possible that if Violet had thrown herself upon her sympathy with an abandonment of sorrow, or had received her with garrulous confidence, some motherly tenderness might have been stirred in her heart; she might have opened it to take Violet into that closest sanctuary of her affections, which existed for the children who needed her and who were not prosperous.

As it was, her greeting was cold. Violet received her with sweet deference, and that was all; she had not expected help from her mother, and had not been waiting for it. Violet's loss had left her without that natural protection of a strong affection and trust in an older person which is needed by a young girl until she is married—the more so if she loves generously and is incapable of self assertion in her attachments—yet this loss did not draw her any nearer to her mother. Mrs. Hilborough felt merely a visitor in her daughter's house, and a very occasional visitor in her life. As before, she

resented Violet's prosperity as a fault, and had a hard but repressed feeling that she could be wanted to give nothing where there was so much already. She felt this the more strongly because of the contrast between the life of this child and that of her other children. Violet wore furs and velvet, and her "feelings" were considered by the people with whom she lived; her friends were distressed if she looked dull, and thought it unallowable that she should have cold feet on her journey home. Now Violet's sisters made their own dresses when they had new ones, which was not often, and no one remembered if they had any feet or any feelings. Mrs. Hilborough was naturally practical and a little hard; her struggles had hardened her still more to all sufferings except actual loss and discomfort, she had no pity to give to mental sorrows, and Violet had no other sorrows to be pitied. Therefore there was no intercourse between the two but the intercourse of daily arrange-

ments and consultations together, and that was not sweetened and made expressive by the consciousness of much mutual tenderness.

Alfred Hilborough also came with his father to the funeral. This was the first visit he had paid to Monkholme since Violet had been engaged to Redfern. It was very strange to him to frequent the familiar places on a new footing, to be almost a stranger there, and to be treated politely by Redfern, who was now the chief person; it was stranger still to be so shut off from Violet, to have no rights regarding her, to know that it would surprise every one to see him paying any but the most ordinary regard to her, and to see Redfern taking care of her and doing all she wanted.

It was a hurried time, however, and there was no leisure for feeling embarrassed, no opportunity for getting in difficult positions. Even Redfern saw very little of Violet, who was chiefly with her mother, and did not

appear much among the guests at Monkholme.

The will was read, leaving all the property to Violet on her marriage to a Hilborough, and no one was surprised at it. Gerald Hilborough, who was present on the occasion, was the most disgusted of all the party to find himself quite left out of the legacies. Alfred had known what to expect, and was not disappointed; he was no more ambitious than he was energetic, though he easily accepted any good things that came to him. Redfern looked rather cross; he did not enjoy being marked out as the successful candidate for honours he had never sought. His engagement to Violet was a great and good thing, he felt, belonging to the true and sacred parts of his private life, but it was disagreeably entangled with other things, and placed him in an uncongenial atmosphere of success and prosperity. Violet, having known everything before, had nothing to care about in this reading of the will, she

was of too simple and single-eyed a nature to be concerned about the impression her affairs produced on the minds of others ; she saw her own actions and position quite separately, just as the necessities for decision required her to see them ; she had few side lights of how they looked to other persons—that never seemed to her to be a great part of the question. It was this unconsciousness of any necessity to explain herself, or to arrange appearances to suit preconceived notions in other minds, that had led her so often to act in a manner incomprehensible and displeasing to Redfern.

Those contradictory moods which had perplexed him would have been inconsistent if they had not been perfectly natural ; they belonged to her own mind, and it did not occur to her to repress half of them because they were not to be commonly found growing with the other half ; the only way she knew of, to avoid being suspected of duplicity,

was, not to be guilty of it, and that security is not always sufficient.

Mrs. Hilborough listened to the reading of the will with an expression of intense, though repressed anxiety. She had been too proud to speak of it to Violet, and it was not for the sake of her youngest child that she waited in suspense for the end. When the clause came, mentioning the legacies to her two eldest daughters and the settlement on herself, her look became less interested. She was to receive as much as she had expected, the bitter part of it was inevitable—that her older children must be indirectly indebted to her youngest for the good fortune that reached them tardily. She expressed no satisfaction, however, to any one; she was perfectly silent on the subject; Violet, absorbed in her own feelings, had almost forgotten how closely this will concerned her mother's household.

Violet went home with Mrs. Hilborough; all those assembled at Monkholme dispersed

without delay, and the old house was partially shut up and left to the care of servants. The frost had passed away before Violet drove away through the garden, between the ivy-covered gate-posts and down the winding lane with its high hedges. The mud was deep in the roads, the trees were black and dripping with moisture, the air was gray and thick, and the hills were out of sight. It was understood that Violet was to return to Monkholme only when she was Redfern's wife.

She went first to stay with her mother, and she was there for several months. It had been arranged that she should leave her mother's for Mr. Donaldson's house in Scotland, and be married from that place in the course of the summer or autumn.

Violet was received in her own family just as she had always been; she felt a stranger amongst them, they treated her with a little ceremony, and did not admit her into the familiarity of neglect. The kindest way

they had of behaving to her was to provide her with pleasant things, and leave her to amuse herself as she could with no one to share them, just as we give a child a doll to nurse, and then go on with our conversation —they went on with their life in that way.

It had been difficult for Violet to feel anything but a fine lady with supercilious airs in Redfern's home ; in her own it was just as difficult not to feel a spoilt and useless child. Her sisters imagined her purely ornamental, her own mother seemed incapable of discerning the real Violet through the artificial colours that her isolated position threw upon her.

With Mrs. James Hilborough she had been revealed as proud and unsympathetic, and had found herself suspected of both condescension and calculation ; at home she discovered herself to be ignorant, luxurious, and helpless, and was regarded as a useless child. She did her best to fall into the ways of the household and to share the interests

there, but they only admitted her as if they supposed she sought a passing amusement, kindly gave her a few directions and a little attention, but took no real help from her, and relied on her for nothing.

It was impossible for them to perceive that she retained a helpful, earnest nature in spite of a too closely guarded, too carefully cherished life. Their own existence had been so full of disappointment and privations, which they had never confided to her, that her life seemed to them only a series of pleasant sensations; they thought she had worn shoes so long that she was incapable of walking barefoot on the hard roads over which their own way went.

Violet had a half-brother, as well as two half-sisters, but she had seen very little of him up to this time. Mr. Hilborough had desired that he should not be much at home so long as Violet was there, and that arrangement, as well as some others, was resented silently by Mrs. Hilborough. Pos-

sibly if she had been left to her own judgment she would not have chosen to let her son have much intercourse with her youngest daughter, but the protection of one child against another, which she might have given readily herself, became an odious thing to her when demanded by some one else.

Violet had no affection for Walter; on the contrary, she had a certain dread of him. He was very handsome, and easy in his manners; he had none of the stiffness and reserve of his sisters. Their severe sense of right seemed to make their faces hard, he had nothing of that kind in his nature, to interfere with the pleasantness of his expression. He was inclined to amuse himself with Violet and to flatter her; he would have made a pet of her if she had allowed it, for he liked a pretty woman, even when she was his sister. He would have neglected his mother and sisters to make a companion of her, would have been willing to kiss her and tease her, to invite her to sit on his knee or

to bring him his slippers and light his cigars, if these things had been to her taste, but they were not.

Violet had a strong feeling of repulsion towards him; she felt, too, that he was a man it was difficult to deal with safely; she had much moral courage, and could even venture on dangerous and unusual ground with most persons, because she had a conscious strength of character, a feeling of distinct individuality which she could assert at need; but with her brother she felt helpless, he was morally empty, there was no point of resistance in his mind which she could touch; he had those manners of a gentleman with which society provides the most stupid of her votaries, but of any higher conscience to regulate his actions he had apparently no glimpse. Violet treated him with her coldest and most particular politeness, and when he ventured to ask her to bring him something —as he was in the habit of asking his own sisters—slightingly and selfishly, she gave

him one of her quiet, blank looks, that seemed just to miss seeing him; changed the curves of her neck and shoulders so that she looked in some way an inch taller, and went on with her work silently. Walter thought her in consequence "a proud little chit, who does not think her own brother good enough to speak to. Won't she have to change her tune when she gets married!" he observed, and sincerely hoped she would.

Yet it was this man who was the absorbing interest of Mrs. Hilborough's life; her daughters had a place with her secondary to his; she cared chiefly for his pleasure and success, the object of helping him was hardly absent from her mind all the day, she regarded each new event first in the light in which it touched him.

Mrs. Hilborough was very tall and straight, she had once been a handsome woman, and had a fine appearance still. In some faces the eyes and general contour and expression

leave the most vivid pictures in the mind after seeing them; Mrs. Hilborough's face, on the contrary, only left a remembrance of strongly-marked features; the foundation, and not the finishing touches of the countenance, were prominent. Her large straight nose, her distinct eyebrows, and the firm line of her mouth were what seemed most impressive in her face; she looked a woman of much character and no great sensibility.

Her daughters were tall like herself; Violet was a little thing amongst them, and the bloom of her face and the dreaminess of her eyes looked almost childish in contrast to their appearance. Ruth, the eldest, had an air of more complete self-repression than her mother; her face had not the calmness of repose, but the stillness of power that is exerted to hold itself in subjection; she never mentioned her own disappointments, and spoke with hardness of those of other persons. She was thirty-two years old and had been engaged for ten years to a curate who had always been too poor to be married.

Violet had seen this curate several times; he was a pale, desponding young man, with a slight stoop in his gait; he had not a great habit of talking, and appeared to have a strong respect for Ruth's opinions, which she was never anxious to express, and expressed sententiously if at all. There was a strong feeling in the household—which Violet did not share—that talking meant little and could serve nothing. Words were used economically as well as other things.

Sarah, the second sister, was pale and worn in appearance; her health had always been delicate; her chief passion was for painting, but she had never been able to gratify it.

Violet had never been much interested in her sister's love affairs; they had been going on since she was a little girl, and the bloom of them had long since worn off; now she felt a new sympathy with Ruth; she wondered if her feelings for the melancholy curate had ever been intense like her own for Redfern; if life meant for her also, chiefly a

presence or an absence, how sick of waiting she must have grown in these long years !

The change made in her sister's prospect by the expected legacy came to her like a revelation of her own selfishness ; it seemed that with this thousand pounds a house could be furnished and the good-will of a boys'-school could be purchased from the principal, a clergyman who had grown old in teaching and was about to retire ; Ruth could therefore be married within a year. The pale curate came and talked quite brightly ; Ruth had actually a little colour in her cheeks. Violet reproached herself for having been so self-absorbed when she saw how little she had known of the lives of her own sisters ; but she watched the satisfaction with a feeling of being apart from it ; she was not welcomed to the family rejoicing any more than she had been admitted to the family sorrows.

This promised legacy brought a new life also to Sarah ; she did not say much of her

altered prospects, but it seemed that now her mother's income was assured, her own little fortune was added, and her sister could go away and be married, the two left would be rich enough to travel, and Sarah would find a warmer climate and reach treasures of art she had never hoped to see. Nothing of this was explained to Violet, she gathered it from desultory remarks that were made in her presence, as if they did not concern her. To be sure they concerned her very nearly in one thing, none of these hoped-for events could take place till she was married.

Mrs. Hilborough reminded her of this.

"I suppose, Violet, you will decide before long what must be your wedding-day," she observed in her calm, uninterested manner.

"Yes," said Violet, flushing, "as soon as I go to Scotland and we can talk to Mr. Donaldson."

"You will not put it off very long, of course?"

"I think it will happen before the summer

is over," said Violet, "grandpapa would not have wished us to wait longer than that," she added.

"It would be quite unnecessary," said her mother.

In a few moments Mrs. Hilborough remarked: "I suppose you imagine, Violet, that the time of your wedding concerns no one but yourself and Redfern, and that you may be as capricious as you choose about it without any concern for others."

"I never thought of being capricious," answered Violet, with the soft light of earnest assurance kindling in her face; "Redfern wishes to be married as soon as possible, and so do I; I shall agree to any time that seems right and convenient."

"I merely wished to remind you that the comfort of others as well as of yourself depends upon it; you have been brought up in a way that has always made it unnecessary to think of any one else, so it might not occur to you to do it now."

"I know about my sisters," answered Violet, "I had thought of it."

"It will relieve me greatly too, for you to be married soon," continued Mrs. Hilborough in a hard tone, which showed that she disliked making the statement, and desired no sympathy, "your brother's affairs are greatly embarrassed; he receives no legacy at all by Mr. Hilborough's will; there is no one except myself who can assist him, and I cannot do that while your sisters are quite dependent on my income."

There was no intended slight in these remarks on either Violet or her grandfather, but Violet felt as she often did, an implied judgment of them both, as of prosperous, indifferent persons, from whom no help or sympathy was ever to have been expected.

Walter spoke to her more distinctly on the subject.

"When is this wedding coming off, Letty?" he inquired one morning, as he drew on his boots ready to go out. He had that

odd way of only addressing the womankind of his house at such spare moments; at other times he occupied himself more profitably with a newspaper or cigar.

"It will not be decided till I go to Mr. Donaldson's," answered Violet.

"I hope you won't be long about it," said Walter, "I'm awfully hard up, and the old lady can't come down with anything till the girls are out of the way."

"I am sorry mamma has to do it at all," said Violet, "she cannot well afford it."

"Well, it *is* a shame, you know," agreed Walter, standing with his back to the fire, and looking gloomy, "but there is nobody else will do it. It is a confounded shame that I have got nothing by that will; everybody comes in for something good except me."

"You know that you were not really related to grandpapa," said Violet, who could judge as calmly as her mother sometimes, "and you never did anything to please him."

"It was not likely; he should have made

himself more agreeable to me first; he never so much as sent me a sovereign; and I am his son's step-son; it's ridiculous for a little chit like you to have all that money, and I nothing, when I'm your brother."

Violet had no reply to make.

"I tell you what," said Walter, frowning more gloomily, "you'd be a little more concerned if you knew what a jolly scrape I'm in. I had to meet a bill at Christmas, and I could not do it; so I was obliged just to use a little cash belonging to the firm where I'm cashier; it will be all right if I can get the money by June; nobody will be any the wiser till then. It was paid before it was expected, but I shall be in a pretty fix if I can't produce it then."

"Why," said Violet, putting down her work to look at him, "that is stealing!"

"If you like. I'm sure I don't care what you call it, if only I get the cash."

"How much is it?"

"Five hundred. If I had had my rights

like the others and got a thousand, it would have set me afloat again. I'm pretty well stranded at present."

"How can mamma get so much money?"

"Don't know! sell the furniture perhaps."

"Oh, Walter, that is dreadful!" said Violet with a flushed face, "don't you care about it?"

"I don't see why I should, if you don't; you have heaps of cash that you mean to keep to yourself. Your feelings may be finer than mine, but I don't see that they are of more use."

"You would do the same thing again, I suppose, if any one helped you," said Violet thoughtfully.

"I don't know that I should. Who would guess that I should not get a penny from that old man? He was near enough before, but that was all the more reason why he should make up for it at the last. Why don't you come down with the money yourself? You have got lots to spare."

"It was not meant for me to use in that way."

"Oh, I dare say. Very convenient. Be comfortable by all means. Spend it on new stables at Monkholme. Or, if you like, buy some new coats for Mr. Redfern Hilborough, and see if they'll make him look a finer fellow," observed Walter with a laugh.

"It is quite true," replied Violet, looking at her brother with a quietly observant glance, which in some way was never pleasant to him, "that the most fashionable coat in the world would not make Redfern Hilborough look at all like you."

Walter felt again that "Violet was an abominable fine lady, and horridly clever," but he merely kicked the hearthrug a little and answered :

"At any rate, you had better not put off your wedding, or we shall all be in a pretty quandary; even you, I suppose, would not like to see me in prison, and the old lady selling her furniture."

After making that observation he marched out.

Violet meditated on the subject, and afterwards spoke of it to her mother.

"Walter says he is in a great difficulty, that he has taken some one else's money," she observed, with a little embarrassment.

"Has he told you?" she answered, in a vexed tone; "it is quite true."

"I should like to help you, if I knew how," said Violet, "you can never get all that money."

"I must manage it," answered Mrs. Hilborough calmly.

"But I have so much," said Violet, "it seems wrong that you should have to struggle and give up things; and yet grandpapa did not wish me to——"

"Mr. Hilborough provided for me quite sufficiently; my son is my own son and need be a trouble to no one else."

"I am your daughter too, and should like to help you."

Mrs. Hilborough said nothing.

"This is an exceptional time, you know," said Violet, "it need not be done again. I have been thinking about it."

"I don't see any way. If Walter understood that money was to be got from you, he might rely on it again; he knows that there is an end to *my* resources."

"I have been thinking. I could give it to you and not to him. He need know nothing of it. I shall have more money than I want when I am married. I could tell Redfern; he would not mind. Five hundred is not very much."

"I should not like Redfern Hilborough to be told."

"I need only say that you were embarrassed with having to help Walter. He would not want to know more."

"I will think about it," said Mrs. Hilborough.

"I shall never consider that I have transgressed grandpapa's wishes till I have spent more than a thousand in that way," Violet

went on. "If Walter had been steady he would have had the same legacy as my sisters, I think; so it can't be wrong for you to have it. I shall tell Redfern that a thousand altogether should be looked upon as ready to be used for you when you need it."

Violet had been thinking much on the subject, and was speaking from previously-formed conclusions.

"So much is unnecessary. I think I shall accept your offer of the five hundred, but I shall look upon it as a loan, and pay it back as I can. I shall not feel required to be in a hurry about that."

"Of course not."

"Still, I would rather repay it, however gradually. Walter shall not know from whom the loan comes, and when he sees me pinching myself to pay it back, he will not be encouraged to be more extravagant."

"But it is not necessary to deny yourself to repay it," said Violet earnestly.

"I prefer to do it. I like to decide my own affairs. I have made my income do before, and should like to go on doing so. Any other steps would injure Walter instead of helping him."

"You know best," Violet answered.

"I shall not accept the five hundred, however, unless both Mr. Donaldson and Mr. Hilborough agree that you are right to lend it; and you must remember that neither of them can give you any power to use it till you are married."

"I know that," said Violet, beginning to understand very distinctly that her marriage was an important event to others besides herself.

CHAPTER V.

ALMOST ALONE.

Redfern went to see Violet more than once in her mother's house; his visits there did not give him quite the same satisfaction as those to Monkholme had done. There was a provoking habit in that staid and silent family of regarding him and Violet as children whose fancies must be gratified, and who must merely be encouraged to be happy. That kind of encouragement always aroused a spirit of opposition in Redfern. Mrs. Hilborough also had a way of regarding him simply with consideration, and with no warmth of feeling either of dislike or sympathy, and that was a little chilling.

She never by any accident of conversation or action got her own sentiments entangled with his, so as to be compelled to judge him with anything but calm justice. She did not misunderstand his character or depreciate his merits; she merely perceived the whole of his nature too clearly, seeing it perhaps a little diminished; she looked at him, as it were, through the wrong end of a telescope, and had a very accurate idea of the proportion of his faults and virtues, without being much interested in either. That sort of correct and complete judgment is a very unjust one when applied to a living character, whose daily motives arise large and new in the present, dwarfing for a time the past ones; it shuts out sympathy, it excludes comprehension of passing sensations, it lessens all power of help, because it disdains to realize the largeness and vividness of near objects, and judges all things as finished when they are still going on. It is a want of moral perspective; life arranged like the

mediæval prints, with the most important events looking the greatest from all points of view, and small things in the foreground never permitted to shut out large ones in the distance. It is untrue in its very truth, for life has to be gone through in daily experiences; to ignore the intenseness of an hour's sensations because they will be gone in an hour is no true way through the difficulties of it, and gives no sense of help or support to sufferers who are not calculating, but only feeling.

Very often the experiences of the old deprive them of the power of comforting the young, instead of giving it to them; they have lost sight of individual struggles in general laws. It does not help a young girl to confide in her mother, when she finds her motives guessed at beforehand, and put down as just what comes to everybody. It seems to make them vulgar things, and she is ashamed of them when they are so brought out into the common life; to her they were

all as new and sacred as they could have been to the first woman. And it is no encouragement to a young man to be strong and do right, when he is wisely told that he will soon "get through all that," with an implication that precisely the same difficulties have come to Brown, Jones and Robinson in their turn.

So it was that Mrs. Hilborough, in seeing the characters and ideas of Violet and Redfern a little too distinctly, was shut out of the truest sight of them, the perception of them in relation chiefly to the passing time and circumstances; and they themselves were repelled by her insight, instead of being attracted by it. Redfern especially felt secretly irritated by Mrs. Hilborough's manner; however much we may like our feelings to be "entered into," it is not very pleasant to find them quietly "looked through," and Mrs. Hilborough did the latter of the two things.

She was a woman who, in her own mind,

despised mankind, and especially men, very much; she looked all round them, and was dazzled by no striking merit so as to shut her eyes to the rest of a character; she judged with cold contempt what she called the "ways and the notions" of men, and therefore she was a practical, but by no means a helpful, woman.

She was on that very account indulgent to all men; she had no irritating feeling of inferiority and uncertain vision to tempt her to assert herself. Just as Mrs. James Hilborough neglected men or grumbled at them, while secretly admiring or fearing them, Mrs. Edgar Hilborough treated them with attention and respect, while she inwardly measured them, and mentally put them out of her way.

She was therefore able to count up what the value and use of a person would come to at the end of twenty years with a certain untruthful accuracy. Redfern was the sort of person in whose favour she saw little balance

at the end of a life-time. Deducting his impatience and unpractical temper from his uprightness and unselfishness, she saw little benefit and pleasure left to accrue from intercourse with him. The little she had heard of Alfred pleased her better. She knew that characters like Redfern, characters that reached lonely moral heights through much suffering and many failures, were occasionally necessary and good to the world; she preferred, however, having little to do with them herself; she thought they brought small satisfaction to their friends in return for much annoyance and anxiety, and she would never have chosen such a one for her daughter's husband. A man like Alfred, who was amiable, slightly lethargic, and easily pleased, was likely to bring more comfort and less disquietude.

"I suppose," she observed one day to Violet, "your grandpapa wished you to marry Redfern rather than Alfred?"

"He was pleased that I liked him best,"

said Violet, disturbed at the implied thought.

Mrs. Hilborough uttered a sound like a prolonged and indistinct "Hem!" with her lips closed, which was a way she had of indicating incredulity and reserved judgment.

"I wonder he decided so," she observed. "I suppose he thought your temperament suited Redfern's. Perhaps he did not think about it at all. Alfred seems to be a most amiable young man."

"So he is," said Violet, with glowing cheeks; "but Redfern is more unselfish than any one I ever knew."

"I dare say," replied Mrs. Hilborough, with cold acquiescence.

Violet felt helpless and wounded; she could not answer more distinctly an unspoken thought, which was also a true one.

"Those unselfish men are not always the easiest to live with," observed Mrs. Hilborough quietly, after a few minutes.

"I don't know that I want some one who

will be just easy to live with," said Violet earnestly, with sparkling eyes and hot cheeks; she had two thoughts in her mind at that moment, one was of Redfern, but the other was of her father, who had also perhaps not been easy to live with, and who had never found that passionate sympathy which accepts one sort of pain as better than another sort of happiness for the sake of a great love.

"Not now, perhaps," replied Mrs. Hilborough, threading her needle with steady fingers and calm eyes; "that wish will come later."

"I would never choose ease and pleasure instead of other things—a fuller life," Violet protested, with the indignation of youth and faith.

"Because you have always had ease and pleasure, and have never known the want of them. Besides, the necessity for those things is felt more strongly as we grow older."

Violet was silent for a few moments; she

sat with idle fingers looking at her mother, who seemed to have got past her into that quiet reach of life where the heart is still and the hands only busy. Violet was yet in the tempestuous part where we feel too much to do a great deal.

When she spoke, it was in an altered voice, with a low tone of appeal.

"But you yourself, mamma, when you were older than I am, you did not choose so—you thought as I did."

Mrs. Hilborough did not answer; she lifted her eyes and glanced at Violet with a curious look that expressed a great deal. It recognized Violet's simplicity with a little wonder, and showed a sense of other motives and more practical ideas than her daughter appeared to guess at; then she went on with her work.

That look was a revelation to Violet; it explained much to her that had been mysterious before—the isolated life of her father, the sad tone of his mind, the peculiar tender-

ness for her, and the separate existences that had gone on in the same household.

She saw that her mother had never misunderstood her father, that she had comprehended all the excellences of his character, and yet would have preferred him to be different. His peculiar virtues had been accepted with the rest of him, but regarded as slight drawbacks to the practical advantages that came to herself and her children by marrying him.

It was safe and wise only to marry a good man; besides, Mrs. Hilborough respected a good man—as a successful thing of an unimportant species—but the good man she had married last was not of the sort she liked best. Her first husband had made a greater show of command, and had used less in reality; he had been more unreasonable and not so decided.

"I don't want to alarm you," said Mrs. Hilborough after a pause; "Redfern is a very upright young man, only it is wise not

to expect too much from that; there is security in it, but not ease. People are sometimes rather apt to imagine that high principles are a mere assurance of good behaviour towards themselves; if you don't look on them so, it is all right. You like him very much, so that is quite enough."

"He cares for me very much too," Violet answered, in a low protesting voice.

"So I can see. Only you must remember that a little affection in some men produces more than a great deal in others, and you must not expect too great a result from a feeling that may be very intense."

"You don't know Redfern in his own home; he is so considerate and self-denying —he is kinder to every one than to himself."

"I dare say," Mrs. Hilborough agreed; adding, "I never perceived that he was particularly kind to himself."

"Because he chooses better things than comfort and pleasure."

"No doubt," assented Mrs. Hilborough,

"those self-denying men who feel so strongly the claims on themselves, are apt to expect a good deal from others too. It is impossible to be hard to themselves and not a little hard to others—their dearest friends especially."

"It will be good for me if Redfern does make hard claims, for I know they will only be just ones. I am too much inclined to make things easy and accept everything that is nice. I should have grown careless and luxurious, if he had not come to make me stronger and show me better things than enjoyment."

"Well, my dear, it is your own choice, though it is not just the choice I should have made for you. At any rate, your circumstances will always be comfortable, and so you can endure having an odd temper to deal with."

"I would sooner," said Violet, rising with an earnest face, "have all my circumstances changed than Redfern—even his odd temper. I could not love him so much if he were not

just what he is, and I only wonder however he can like me when I am so little worth it."

She waited to hear no more wise remarks, but walked away to her own room, where she brooded in passionate and impatient indignation over the injustice of the world to that heart that was to her the highest and best thing the world held.

Perhaps she resented her mother's observations all the more because she herself sometimes felt a sense of insecurity in her dealings with Redfern. It was true that occasionally she did not seem sufficient for him, and it seemed that his sufficiency was not great enough to make up for her own want of worth; she never doubted that the shortcomings were on her own side, but she cometimes thought that if he were a little greater he might have overlooked those shortcomings more easily; yet even that thought she always rejected as a treachery to him.

They both of them felt the need of a little sympathy from some other person, they wanted a little moral support in their belief in each other. So long as Mr. Hilborough was alive they had had that help; when they had disagreed most bitterly, and had seemed most hopelessly parted, it had always been some comfort and hope to find one person who still thought they were very much to each other, who saw bonds of sympathy between them that were stronger than the discords they themselves could not look past.

Now it was changed. They alone in all the world saw their natures suited to each other; it seemed that when they were in most perfect concord, others saw points of difference between them that outweighed the unity; and if they differed, if they drifted one inch apart, there was no assurance of better things to be found in the people about them. Nobody smiled at the tragedy, saying, "That is nothing," and so throwing comedy lights

upon it; on the contrary, every one appeared to think that discord was just what was sure to come.

Still Violet clung fast to her belief that they belonged to each other by all the natural laws of sympathy and attachment; to the belief that Redfern was worthy of all love, there was no need to cling—she never doubted it; but that she was meant to love him, that they needed each other in life, that she could help him with her affection—these were truths she had to hold against incredulous friends, and through difficulties in her own intercourse with him.

Redfern understood very well what was Mrs. Hilborough's estimate of him, and it irritated him the more because he did not think it unjust; he saw that she believed Violet had not chosen a pleasant lot in marrying him, and he agreed with her entirely, and so was vexed with himself, with his own character, above all with his

act of voluntarily fastening Violet down to love him and so to be unhappy.

Violet's strong and simple faith, that knew no looking back, held his heart however against his own doubts and the disbelief of others, even after the sympathetic time of sorrow was passed, and he found himself in the unpleasant position of a poor suitor to an heiress, whose prospects he spoilt, in the opinion of her friends and of himself, by marrying her.

She met him always with such unconsciousness of anything but their love for each other, such an ignorance of the idea that anything else could affect their position much, that he was silent about his own vexations, and never said how his false position among her friends galled and irritated him. He was cross sometimes, and hard in his judgment of himself and others; he spoke bitterly and behaved morosely, but she only longed the more passionately to reach farther into his heart, and see how to please him

better. She waited with a sore and helpless tenderness for the hour when he should come back to her out of these moods, and all the time she comforted herself with the one assurance that he loved her; she knew that was true, and she would look at nothing else; she said it over and over again to herself when she was lonely and sad in her own home, and his letters hurt instead of comforting. She did not want anything more, she did not want him to be always reasonable or kind, but only just to love her; and the one appeal she made for herself in her own heart, the one reason she believed Redfern could have for overlooking her failings and insufficiencies was just the fact that she loved him so much; she never thought of any other.

Sometimes love is so strong that, as in every other kind of hunger, we mistake it for a claim on the world, instead of seeing it only as a suffering of our own natures; and Violet had learnt to care for Redfern so

much, that she could have said, in answer to all objections, as a reason for all renunciations, "But I love him!" and have believed the answer sufficient.

END OF VOL. II.

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